

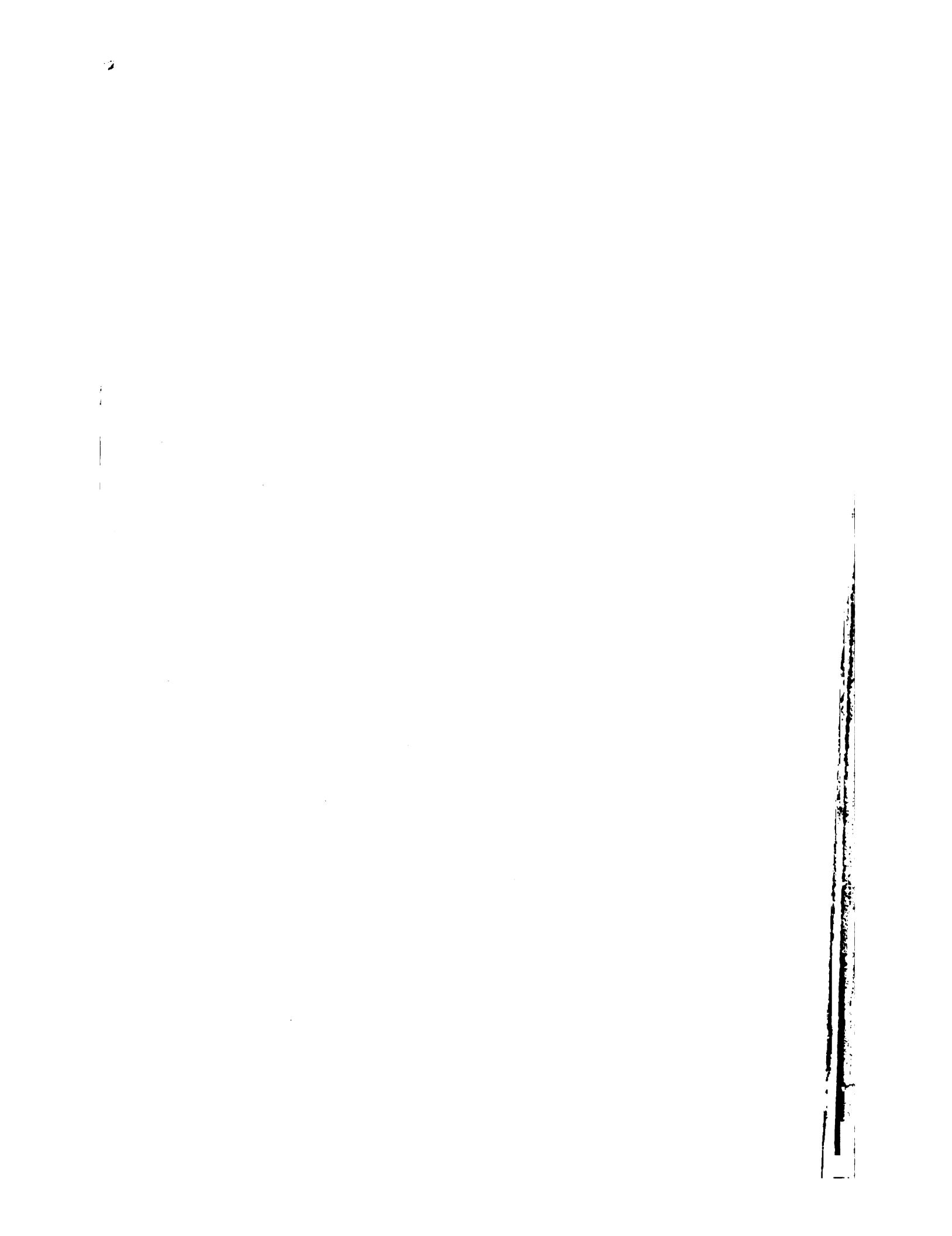
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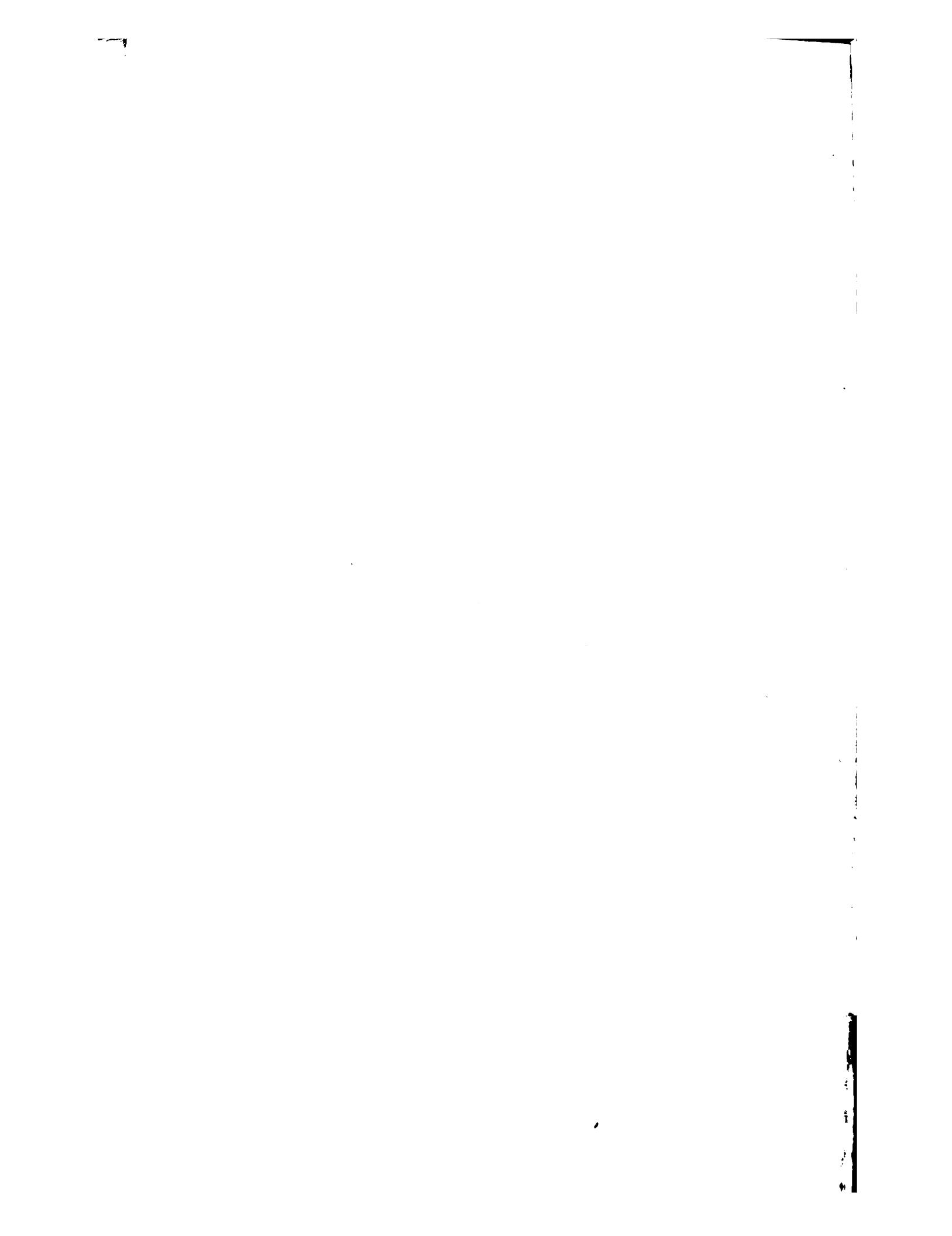
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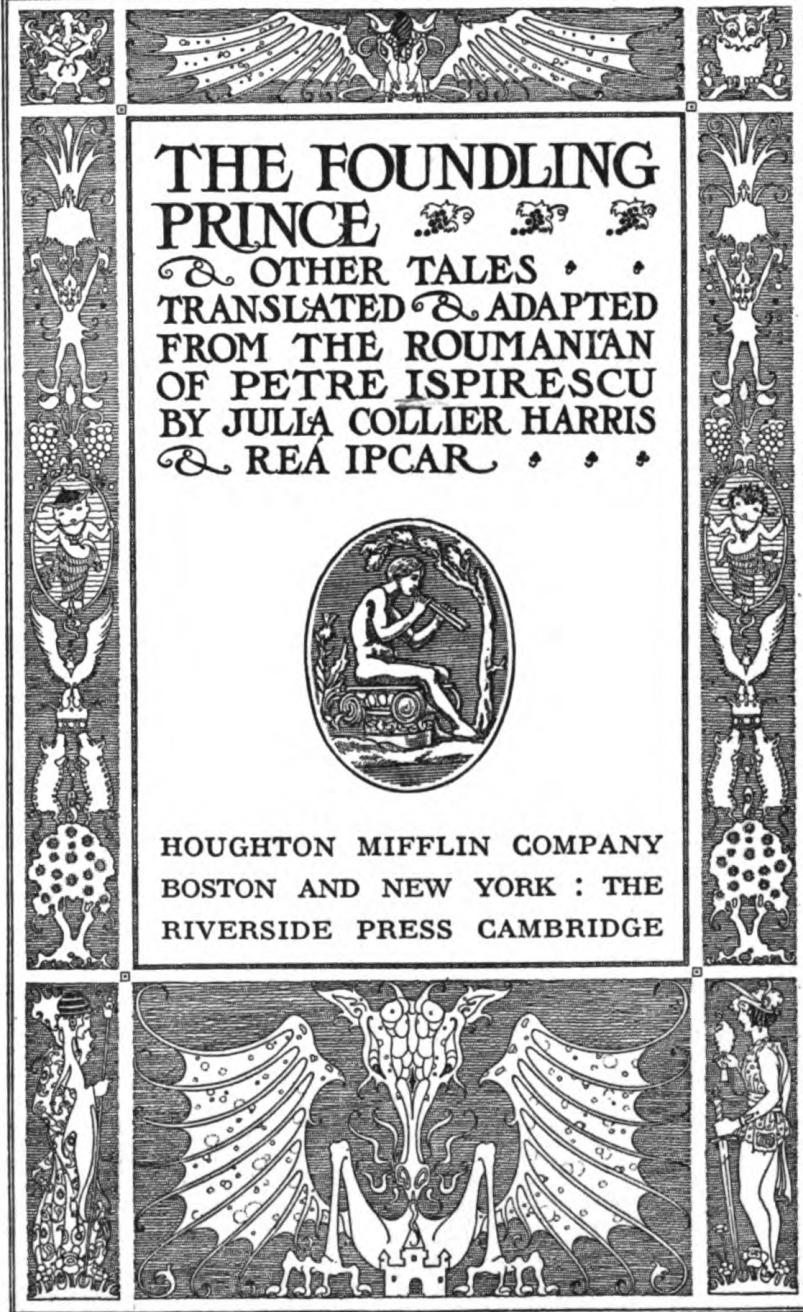


**THE FOUNDLING PRINCE
AND OTHER TALES FROM
THE ROUMANIAN**

THE FOUNDLING
PRINCE . . .
& OTHER TALES . . .
TRANSLATED & ADAPTED
FROM THE ROUMANIAN
OF PETRE ISPIRESCU
BY JULIA COLLIER HARRIS
& REA IPCAR . . .



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INTRODUCTION

PETRE ISPIRESCU

PETRE ISPIRESCU was born January 21, 1830, at Bukharest, in the faubourg Pescaria-Veche, where his father, George Ispirescu, kept a small hair-dressing establishment. His mother was by birth a Transylvanian. The boy attended the parochial school of Udricanî and followed the prescribed course with a hundred or more other pupils of his own age and social class. Later he was sent to the high school of Domna Balasa, that he might be better fitted by education to enter the Church; and some time afterward he was confided to the tuition of a priest of the Metropolitan Cathedral, with whom he was to finish his clerical studies.

But the boy's inclinations were elsewhere, and, led by a desire to extend his field of knowledge, he did what so many other young literary aspirants have done, — entered a printing establishment, that of the typographer, Carcalache, and later he worked with another printer, Copainig. He won

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the confidence of both patrons by his enthusiasm and industry, and as a result of his efficiency, he was eventually named Director of the National Printing House.

In 1864 we find Ispirescu at the head of the establishment of C. A. Rosetti, and in the course of the same year, in company with the brothers Gobe, he opened the "Printing House of Associated Workmen." In 1868, with other fellow-workmen, he established the "New Printing House of Associated Workmen," but this association was not of long duration, and Ispirescu soon found himself in sole ownership of the establishment which from this time was known by the name of "The Printing House of the Roumanian Academy," and there he printed during twenty years the annals of the National Academy.

Thus Ispirescu advanced little by little from the position of apprentice to that of compositor, of chief of workroom, and finally to that of Master Printer. His life was one of simplicity and high moral integrity. He lived in the midst of a large family, of which he was the sole support, in an unpretentious, rather dilapidated house which

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was surrounded by an old garden. In this home he dwelt until the end, and it was here that he put into artistic form the folk-tales which had so appealed to him in his childhood. Absorbed in his work, fête-days were like other days to him, and he felt no inclination to travel far from his unpretentious workshop. In fact, we have record of only two trips beyond his immediate neighborhood — one a brief business sojourn at Rosioru-de-Vede and another a journey for his health, in 1883, to Câmpu-Lung.

It was in 1862 that he published his first stories in *The Roumanian Peasant*. These received such a hearty welcome from the public that he was encouraged to reprint them in a small pamphlet edition entitled, *Stories and Narratives of the People*. In 1872 he published a second volume, *Roumanian Tales and Legends*, which contained eighteen stories, a number of anecdotes, and one hundred and eighteen riddles, “gathered from the mouths of the people.” The writer’s identity was disguised under the pseudonym, “Master Printer.” The introduction to this volume was written by B. P. Hasden, who called attention to the importance of this collection of tales, and

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spoke of the beauty of their form as well as the value of their content. In 1874 the second volume of *Roumanian Tales and Legends* appeared, and from time to time editions of this work were published in Wallachia and Moldavia.

In 1876 a third volume of *Tales and Legends* followed; also a work entitled *The Life and Exploits of Michel the Bold*. The gleaner of these delightful tales could no longer hide his identity under his modest pen-name, and when, in 1879, the *Stories of an Old Gossip* appeared, the writer's own name was employed. A volume of riddles in verse was printed in 1880; in 1883 a collection of *Proverbs*; and in 1886 a collection of *Moral Tales*.

Amongst Ispirescu's unpublished manuscripts was found a *History of the Turko-Russian War of 1876*, and it was while working on this history, during the night hours of the 21st of November, 1887, that death overtook him. This rarely gifted son of Roumania, modest, loyal, and single-hearted, died, as might be expected, a poor man, and his family had no means of bringing out a complete edition of his works, a monument which his talents and achievements merited. This hon-

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orable task, however, was later undertaken and carried out by the Roumanian Academy.

It may not be amiss to call attention briefly to certain characteristics of the tales of Ispirescu as a whole. For instance, the sovereigns are always emperors, sometimes specifically designated as the "Green Emperor," the "Red Emperor," the "Emperor Mazarel"; and always the imperial children are referred to as the "daughter of the emperor," the "son of the emperor," rather than "princess" or "prince." This custom is probably a souvenir of the Roman dominion in ancient Dacia (from the time of Trajan to that of Aurelian). With the exception of the "Red Emperor," who personifies the demoniac essence, the sovereigns are invariably beneficent, "rendering justice in the fear of God." Their power is vast and absolute, but often the ruler seeks guidance from the oldest and most experienced of his "boyars" or nobles. The rôle of the empress is also benign; but she is the type of the virtuous wife.

The two principal figures throughout these stories are Fet-Frumos and Iliane. Fet-Frumos

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plays the rôle of the “Prince Charming” of Occidental tales, and he is endowed with every physical charm, and a precocity which leads him to weep “before he is born,” upon which his father promises him “youth without age and life without death.” This chivalrous hero is in eternal enmity against the “Zmeii,” or dragons, and his most frequent rôle is that of rescuer of ladies in distress. With adolescence, he feels himself impelled toward adventure and a mission of mystic significance. As a reward of his prowess, he receives as wife always the youngest daughter of the emperor or the youngest fairy in the magic circle. In a word, Fet-Frumos is handsome, brave, and cunning—without fear, but not always without reproach!

Iliane is the ideal of feminine beauty and grace. She is so dazzling that she appears to be a daughter of the sun — “the flower in her hair sings, and nine empires listen to its song;” “she is so lovely that the stars smile upon her.” She also is the daughter of an emperor, and her empire is far, far away — “beyond nine seas and nine terrains.” She can belong to none other than Fet-Frumos, and their marriage is the in-

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evitable conclusion of all the stories in which they figure. With the exception of these personages and of "Madame Kiraline," the heroes and heroines of Ispirescu are indicated simply as the "son of an emperor," "the daughter of an emperor."

In these stories, as in the whole cycle of Roumanian myths, there are two categories of fairies, the "Dîne" and the "Lèlé." The former are kind and complaisant, the latter wicked and malicious. The word "Lèlé" is the third person plural of the pronoun "I," and the peasants so designate the evil fairies through a fear of pronouncing their name.

The "Zmeii," or dragons, are the embodiment of audacity and courage, and their name has always served in Roumania to qualify illustrious warriors. The palace of the Zmeii is situated "over there, where the Devil weans his children." When the Zmeii are absent, their mother guards their domain, and she is full of power and guile. She is always in pursuit of Fet-Frumos because he has killed one of her sons and stolen away a captive princess; and if the horse of Fet-Frumos "flies like the wind," hers "flies like

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thought." The souls of those she destroys she shuts in barrels, and when she is defeated in combat, she devours one of these souls to restore her strength. Finally, there are giants and dwarfs — the former resembling the Cyclops in that they have only one eye, and the latter are of divers strange and fantastic shapes.

In Roumanian mythology the personifications of the winds figure prominently, and Ispirescu frequently introduces them. The grotto of the winds is situated in the "other world," therefore mortals rarely attain it. The mother of the winds is of kindly disposition and is mediator between her son and mortals. We find three winds in Ispirescu's tales: the "Crivetz," or North Wind; the "Furious Wind," and the "Wind of Springtime." The "Furious Wind" resides in the most remote regions of all; we have no portrait of this mysterious being, but we know that "not even the lark can mount to his domain, and should she attempt it, she would perish."

The enchanted horse plays an important rôle in the tales; he is the friend and counselor of the person whom he carries on his back to the far corners of the earth.

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The Devil has only a secondary rôle in the stories, and he is often the dupe of his own stupidity, and a butt of Fet-Frumos. He is usually disguised as a monk or priest.

Amongst the adversaries of Fet-Frumos we must not ignore the "Sgigane," or gypsy, who is always an idle boaster, ready to profit by the good deeds of others, and of malicious and deceitful intent. The "Arabes" play a curious part and are usually summoned from out the depths of the earth, by means of a magic ring, to execute the will of their master. They are richly attired and serve at table.

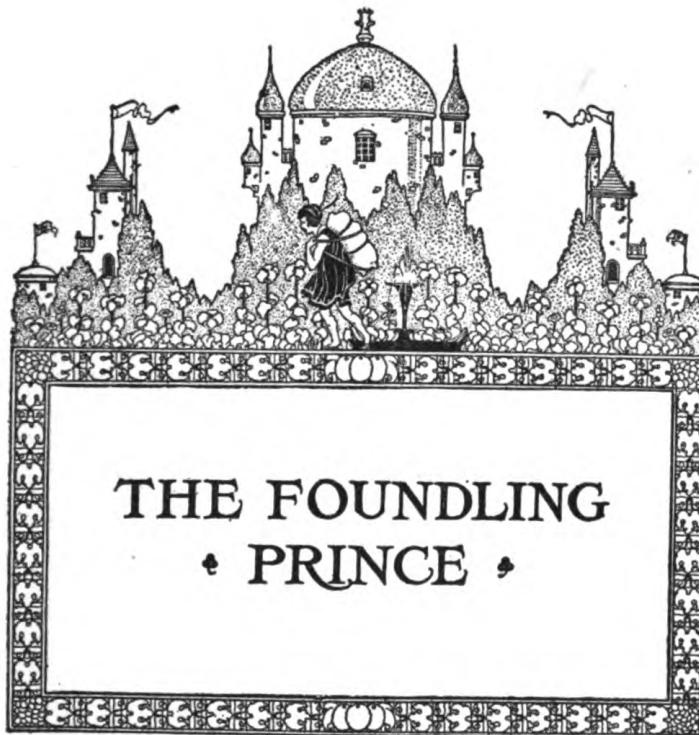
The setting of the tales is indicated in general fashion: they take place in a palace, a town, a village, an empire, a hut, a church, an inn, etc., which are located anywhere and everywhere. Detached from any particular terrain, they transport the reader from one country to another; from the borders of the sea to the depths of the forest, from flower-sown plains to idyllic heights. A chivalresque sentiment pervades the stories, inspired sometimes by romantic love and again by the desire to bring about justice. At the same time they reveal a naïve religiosity

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which expresses itself in the intervention of saints and hermits, or through the injunction of the *raconteur*, who asserts that "by the grace of God" or "through divine protection" his hero shall override all obstacles.

Finally, the native wit of Ispirescu is most seductive, and the pungent homeliness of the folk-tales gives one a vivid picture of the Roumanian peasant and his surroundings.

THE FOUNDLING PRINCE



THERE was once upon a time a hermit who lived all alone, far from mankind, in a great desert. His nearest neighbors were wild animals, but so pious and gentle was this man of God that even the savage beasts bowed down before him when they met him. One day he was walking on the border of a stream which flowed near his hut, when, all at once, he perceived floating on the water a

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little chest, tightly closed and covered with tar, and he heard a noise like the cry of an infant proceeding from it. He stopped to reflect, offered up a prayer, then waded out into the stream and drew the chest toward the shore. On opening it he found inside a tiny baby. The holy man lifted the child in his arms, and immediately its cries ceased. Around the baby's neck was a piece of parchment suspended by a ribbon, and on the parchment was written the little one's sad story. It seemed that its mother was a lady of imperial birth who had been overwhelmed by the tides of life and who had been forced by the wrath of her father to abandon her infant.

The hermit longed to keep the child which God had sent him, but when he recalled that he had no food suitable for its nourishment, he burst into sobs and fell on his knees, offering up prayers to Heaven. A miracle came to pass, and in answer to his prayers, all at once, beside a corner near his hut a vine sprang up and quickly grew as high as the roof. The holy man approached the vine and examined it and found growing upon it grapes that were fully ripe, others that were

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half-ripe, and still others that were just beginning to form on the bunch. He pressed the juice out of the ripe grapes, gave it to the baby to drink, and thanked God for his goodness in coming to his aid. He continued to nourish the child with the juice of ripe grapes until it was large enough to eat other things.

As the boy grew older, his foster-father taught him to read, to seek his food, and to hunt. Finally, one day the holy man summoned him to his side and said:—

“My son, I am growing very feeble, for I am an old man, as you can see. Soon I shall quit this world to live in paradise. I am not your real father. I found you floating down the stream in a chest, abandoned by your mother on account of the wrath of her father, who was an emperor. When you perceive my body all numb and stiff and as cold as ice, I shall be sleeping the sleep eternal, and then a lion will come to dig my grave. Do not be afraid, but cover me over with earth. The only heritage I have to leave you is a horse’s bit. So, after my burial, climb up into the loft, take the bit, shake it, and a winged horse will appear whose counsels you must follow.”

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The holy man ceased speaking and the boy felt very sad at the thought of losing his kind foster-father. At the end of three days the hermit bade farewell to his son and passed into eternity.

Everything happened as he had foretold. The lion came, roaring loudly, and when he saw the dead body of the hermit he dug a grave with his paws, and the boy placed his foster-father in it and covered him with earth. Then the lad remained beside the grave for three days and three nights, weeping and sobbing in his loneliness. At the end of that time he was overcome by the pangs of hunger and aroused himself from his grief and sought food on the vine. But the grapes were all dried up, so, recalling the words of the hermit, the boy climbed up into the loft, found the bit and shook it, and a beautiful winged horse appeared before him and said:—

“What do you wish, little master?”

The child told the beast all that had happened since the death of his foster-father, and added:—

“I am alone in the world. God has taken the father which he gave me, so do you stay by me. We will build another hut, some distance from

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here, for I cannot remain so near the grave of my father, else I shall spend all my time mourning him."

"We do not need to do that," answered the horse. "Rather let us go to a country where you shall find other creatures like yourself."

"How so?" demanded the boy in astonishment. "Are there other beings like my father and myself and can we live amongst them?"

"Certainly," replied the horse.

"Then why do they not come to us?"

"Because there is nothing here for them. We must go to their country."

"Then, let us go!" cried the child with joy.

But the horse said it was necessary first to find clothing, for men, he explained, did not go about naked. And the child did not reply, for he was wondering what could be done. Then the good horse ordered him to thrust his hand into its left ear, and from thence he drew out suitable garments, and the animal helped the child to clothe himself, and thus clad he sprang on the horse's back, and they set out.

When they reached the nearest town, the boy was frightened to see so many people running

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about and making a noise like the humming of many bees. He gazed upon everything with wonder, above all at the height and beauty of the houses, but he noticed that everything had its use.

And the horse said to him, soothingly:—

“See, little master, all is in good order, as soon as you know how to unravel it.”

They remained some time in the town, so as to accustom the child to the multitude and its noise, and then they set out for a distant country, the domain of three fairies. The horse advised the boy to seek for a place as page in the home of the fairies. The fairies hesitated to grant his request, because of his extreme youth, but finally they gave in and installed him in their household.

The horse came often to see his young master. One day he advised the lad to find out if there was any chamber in the palace which contained a bath, because in the past there had been a bath there which on certain days was filled with golden water, and any one bathing therein would have his hair turned into gold. Also he was ordered to search in the fairies' wardrobes and discover, if

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possible, three costumes which the fairies guarded carefully.

The lad had been given permission by the fairies to enter nearly all the rooms so that he might sweep, dust, and arrange the furniture. But one room was forbidden him, and that was the one containing the bath. The boy, however, laid great stress on the counsels of the horse, so, during the absence of the fairies, he turned over his friend's advice in his mind, and sought until he found the three costumes.

Time passed and one fine day the fairies set out to pay a visit to some neighboring fairies. On their departure they ordered the page to listen carefully and as soon as he heard any noise in the bathroom to climb into the garret and make a hole in the roof, and this would be the signal for their return, for they knew the time had almost arrived for the flowing of the golden water.

The lad watched, and when the miracle came to pass, he informed the horse, who told him to bathe himself. He did so, and when he came out of the bath, he seized the package containing the three costumes and fled on his winged horse as fast as the wind. But no sooner had he passed

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the door in his flight than the house, the court, and the garden began to tremble and to groan in such fashion that the fairies noticed it and returned in great haste. When they saw that the page had fled and that their costumes were stolen, they ran after him and pursued him from place to place, but he redoubled his speed, and soon he was over the border of their domain, and there he stopped. And the fairies came up with him and were full of rage when they saw that he had escaped; and they said to him:—

“You have, indeed, been clever to trick us thus. At least, let us see your golden hair.”

So he spread out his locks of gold upon his shoulders and the fairies looked upon him with envy, after which they ordered him to return the costumes he had stolen. But he refused their request and kept the clothing in place of the wages which they owed him. Then he set out, and in the evening he arrived in a town where he bought a cap of goatskin under which he concealed his golden locks, and he proceeded to the imperial gardener and begged for the position of gardener's assistant. He was so earnest in his request that finally the head gardener answered him

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favorably. He was told how to dig the garden, to water the flowers, to gather up the leaves off the grass, and to keep the borders free from weeds. He listened carefully to all these directions and soon became a skillful assistant.

Now, the emperor in whose domain he had taken service had three daughters, all of whom were beautiful and accomplished. But their father was so taken up with affairs of state that he had neglected to find them husbands. Angry and disappointed over their father's neglect of them and unhappy at the prospect of becoming old maids, the three princesses decided to go before him and complain. So one day the emperor was greatly surprised to see them approaching, each one carrying aloft a melon on a platter. The young maidens placed their offerings upon a table in front of their father and withdrew without saying a word. The emperor was puzzled at their behavior and called upon the wise men of the kingdom for advice. When the sages assembled, they cut open the melons and examined them. The first was too ripe, the second was good to eat, and the third had just begun to ripen.

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Then the oldest wise man said to the ruler:—

“Glorious emperor, this offering represents the ages of your daughters, and it signifies that the time has come for each to have a home of her own.”

So the emperor decided to find husbands for them, and the news spread far and wide, and suitors began to stream in from all the neighboring countries, and soon the eldest princess found a husband to her liking. The marriage festivities lasted for three days and three nights, and afterward the young couple were conducted with much pomp as far as the frontier of the empire.

A little later, the second daughter also became betrothed, and after the marriage and its attendant festivities, she too was escorted with her husband to the frontier by all the members of the court. But the youngest princess remained in her room, under some pretext or other.

When the gardener's assistant thought himself alone, he was seized with a desire to disport himself as if he had been a noble. So he called his horse, put on one of the fairies' beautiful costumes, which was of sky-blue silk brocaded with silver stars, and rode out into the garden under

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the princess's window. He caroled amongst the flower-beds with a heart full of joy, for he suspected that the princess was watching him from her chamber.

Soon he perceived that his horse, in his exuberance, had torn up the garden and spoiled the flowers, so he got down quickly, took off his beautiful costume, and began to repair the damage done by his companion. On his return the head gardener was very angry over the wretched state of his garden, and he scolded his assistant severely and was about to beat him, but the princess, who still watched at the window, called him in and begged him to pardon the young man and bribed him with a purse full of gold.

Since the marriage of the two elder princesses all had passed quietly at the court, but the emperor now began to be uneasy on account of his youngest daughter. She seemed sad and absent-minded; she never left the palace, but remained all day glued to her place at the window, as if in a dream. So her father concluded that a husband would cure her melancholy, and he set about finding a suitable one amongst the young nobles of the neighboring courts. But the princess

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would not listen to any of their proposals. At the end of his wits, her father again consulted the wise men. After much discussion, one of these sages suggested that a balcony be built in front of the princess's window, upon which she could sit, and that all the suitors be commanded to pass before her and display their charms, and upon the one which she preferred she might bestow a golden apple.

So the balcony was erected and a herald announced, far and near, that on a certain day all the marriageable young men roundabout were invited to pass before the young maiden so that she might make a choice of a husband from amongst them. Many presented themselves, but none pleased her. So it was whispered about that the princess must be deformed, since she had no desire to marry. Then a wise old noble who had seen much of the world suggested that the servitors of the court also be allowed to pass before the balcony, — the major-domo, the gardener, the cook, the imperial coachman, and all the pages. This they did, but the princess ignored them all. So the emperor asked if any servitor of the court had been overlooked, and it was dis-

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covered that the gardener's assistant, a rough, uncouth lad, had not shown himself.

"Let him come also," commanded the emperor.

Therefore he was called, and so comical was he because of his shabby goatskin cap and his awkward manners that everybody laughed and mocked him. Nevertheless, he was ordered to pass before the princess, but he hung back shamefacedly and had to be pushed forward.

As soon as he approached the lady, she presented him with the golden apple, and then the ill-mannered lout raised a great outcry and ran here and there, like a fool, declaring that he was being made sport of.

As for the emperor, he was vastly astonished and demanded if his daughter had taken leave of her senses, since she had chosen such an ugly half-wit for a husband, and he ordered a second trial to be made. But the young maiden again favored the gardener's assistant, although he showed no appreciation of her preference and continued to run about making an outcry.

So the emperor was deeply offended and wounded to the bottom of his heart; yet he

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ordered still another test, and all the suitors de-filed for a third time before the balcony. But the princess held stubbornly to her choice, and the wise men counseled her father to submit to her caprice and affiance her to the gardener's assistant.

The marriage was held in secret, and the emperor wished to exile the young couple far from his sight, for he cared neither to see nor to hear of them. But in the end he was persuaded to let them live in a hut on the confines of the imperial domain, and the young husband became a water-carrier. All the court servitors delighted to mock him and pelted his hut with refuse, but as none dared enter it no one was aware that this dingy cabin contained all manner of treasures which the winged horse had gathered from the four corners of the earth to lay at the feet of his mistress. Not even the emperor's palace contained as much riches as this little hut.

Full of rage at being refused by the princess, the other suitors swore vengeance and got together to invade the country and carry away the ugly husband of her choice. The emperor was greatly troubled when he heard of the plots of

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his neighbors, and he prepared to take up arms against them, for what else could he do? His two princely sons-in-law came with their armies and put themselves at his service, and the water-carrier sent his wife to obtain the emperor's permission that he too might be allowed to serve. Furious, the emperor replied:—

“Depart from before my eyes, ungrateful daughter that you are! It is because of you that our peace is troubled. May I never see you or your husband again, miserable creatures that you are!”

But his daughter's prayers prevailed in the end, and consent was given that his despised son-in-law should go to war as water-carrier for the troops. So all preparations were made and the forces set out. The water-carrier, meanly clad and mounted on a rickety old beast, went ahead. Jogging along, he came to a muddy stretch of road and his old horse sank deep in the mire. The poor fellow found himself in a ridiculous plight. There he was, planted deep in the mud, tugging at his miserable beast to release him, first at his head, then at his tail, but without success. The emperor and his two princely sons-

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in-law, the officers and soldiers, came up and laughed at him and mocked him.

But as soon as the last soldier had passed, the despised son-in-law lifted his old hack free of the mire, summoned his winged steed, clothed himself in one of his magic costumes, all embroidered with flowers, and set out for the battlefield.

Arrived there, he mounted the summit of a near-by hill and looked down upon the two armies, and seeing that the forces of his father-in-law were the feebler, he charged down from the hill, and sword in hand he glided like a pike amongst the forces of the enemy, cutting to the right and the left and slaying a host of men and putting the rest to rout.

As for the emperor, he thought a miracle had come to pass, and thanked God humbly for having sent an angel to his aid. Then, all joyous, he led his army homeward. But on the way he again encountered the water-carrier, who had reassumed his mean garments and was still striving with might and main to release his old hack from the mud. Being in a good humor toward all the world, the emperor said to his soldiers:—

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“Go, help this good-for-nothing pull his beast out of the mire.”

Scarcely had the men returned to their homes when the enemy again invaded the country, and, with an army even more formidable than the first, they advanced and laid waste the land. So the army of the emperor was got ready in haste and set out for the second time to drive back the invaders.

• The despised son-in-law again begged permission to accompany the troops and was covered with ridicule for his pains; nevertheless, permission was granted and he set out for the second time on his old hack. Again he sank in the mire and the entire army mocked at his efforts to pull his poor beast out of the mud. But when they had passed, the water-carrier summoned his winged steed, put on one of his magic costumes, and appeared upon the battlefield. The armies sounded their trumpets, beat their drums, and the combat commenced.

From his place on the hilltop, the despised son-in-law watched the battle, and when he saw it going against his father-in-law, he charged

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amongst the enemy and again put them to rout. The emperor thanked God for his miraculous assistance and led his men home victorious. On the way he came across the poor water-carrier still stuck in the mud, and for the second time ordered his soldiers to pull him out.

But the truce was even shorter this time and, greatly saddened, the emperor learned that the enemy's forces, as numerous as the leaves of the forest and the grass of the fields, had again crossed the frontier. So there was nothing for him to do but to organize his army for the third time and face the enemy. As before, the water-carrier preceded the forces on his rickety old horse, and, stuck in the mire, he was again the butt of their contemptuous jokes. Nevertheless, on the disappearance of the last man, he put on his most magnificent costume (that one which was ornamented with embroideries representing the sun, the moon, and the stars), loosened his locks of gold on his shoulders, spurred his winged steed, and, in the twinkling of an eye, mounted the hilltop from whence he surveyed the two armies. The battle raged fiercely and the combatants were covered with dust and blood.

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Toward evening the forces of the emperor were thinned out and the victory seemed with the enemy. Seeing which the despised son-in-law darted from on high like a beam of light and plunged like a thunderbolt into the forces of the invader. The soldiers were stupefied with fright at this supernatural apparition and their hands refused to wield the sword. Profiting by the terror which his appearance inspired, the celestial warrior brandished his sword and mowed down the ranks of men, who fled before him in disorder, without resistance, thinking only of escape from this terrifying specter, which pursued them relentlessly and cut them down like weeds.

At the end of the combat the emperor perceived that one of the hands of his hero was bleeding, so he offered him his own handkerchief to bind up the wound. Then the victorious forces returned home with joy, for the enemy was forever defeated. They were obliged to pass by the muddy stretch of road, and there, as before, they saw the water-carrier and his horse stuck fast in the mud, and again the emperor ordered his soldiers to release them.

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Shortly after these events the emperor fell sick and became blind. All the doctors of the realm were summoned, but not one of them could find a remedy against this malady. But in a dream one night an old man appeared before the aged ruler and told him to drink of the milk of a red goat and also to bathe his eyes in the liquid.

As soon as the two princely sons-in-law heard this they set out to seek the remedy, and though the poor water-carrier begged that he might go, too, they refused his offer with scorn. Nevertheless, the latter called up his winged horse, galloped into the marshes, captured a herd of wild red goats, and led them home. Then he disguised himself as a shepherd and went out to meet his brothers-in-law carrying some ewe's milk in a pail. He pretended not to recognize them, and when they asked him what he had in his pail, he replied that it contained milk from a red goat for the restoration of the emperor's eyesight.

The sons-in-law wished to buy the milk, but the shepherd told them that it was not to be had for money, but if they wished they might have it by declaring themselves his slaves and permit-

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ting him to brand them on their backs with his mark. In return he promised that after marking them he would vanish from their sight forever.

So the princely sons-in-law, greedy for the milk, consented; the shepherd branded them on their backs, gave them the pail, and disappeared. They then returned to the emperor and offered him the much-coveted remedy and he drank of it, and bathed his eyes, but all to no purpose, for it was not the milk of a red goat at all.

About this time his youngest daughter came before him and said:—

“Father, here is milk from a red goat which my husband sends to you. I pray you drink of it, and permit me to use it in bathing your eyes.”

“But how is it, then,” demanded the emperor, “that your good-for-nothing husband, who has never done a useful thing in his life, can be capable of a good deed now? My two princely sons-in-law, who were my allies at the most critical time of my life, have failed to find the remedy. Do you suppose that a worthless lout like your husband could be successful? And, above all, have I not forbidden you to appear before me? How dare you disobey my command?”

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“Beloved father,” replied the princess, “I accept willingly all the punishment you inflict on me, only do you bathe your eyes in the milk sent you by your humble slave.”

At last the resolution of the emperor broke down before the prayers and tears of his daughter, and he drank of the milk she had brought and bathed his eyes in it. Soon he found that he could see dimly, as through a fog. He bathed them again the second and the third days; then at last he could see as well as anybody. Overcome with joy, the emperor gave a great feast to which he bid all the nobles of the empire, and yielding to the prayers of the young couple, he agreed that his despised son-in-law might occupy the least important seat at table.

In the midst of the feast the water-carrier arose and advanced humbly toward the emperor, begging that he might address him. Obtaining permission, he said:—

“Glorious emperor, is it the custom for slaves to sit at table with their masters?”

“No,” replied the emperor.

“That being so and you being a just ruler, order the two men seated at your right and at

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your left to quit the table, for they are my slaves and as such they are branded on the back."

And the emperor ordered his sons-in-law to lay bare their backs, and he saw thereon the mark, and he commanded them to remain standing through the feast.

Toward the end of the banquet the water-carrier drew out from his pocket the handkerchief with which the emperor had bound up his hand. Astonished, the ruler demanded to know how he came by the handkerchief which he had given to the celestial warrior who had come to his aid.

"I crave your pardon, glorious emperor, but it was to me that you gave the handkerchief to bind up my hand."

"Then it was you who aided me?" asked his father-in-law in astonishment.

"Yes, glorious ruler."

Whereupon the despised son-in-law quitted the table and returned shortly arrayed in his magic costume ornamented with embroideries which represented the sun on his breast, the moon on his back, and two Lucifers on his shoulders. Thus clad and with his golden locks spread

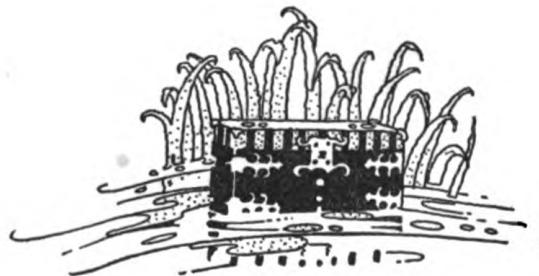
THE FOUNDLING PRINCE

on his neck, he presented himself before the emperor and the court.

All the guests arose and saluted him because he was beautiful and wonderful to see. Their eyes might have withstood the brilliance of the sun, but not that of this splendid prince.

Then the emperor applauded the choice of his daughter and came down from his throne and placed the once-despised son-in-law in his place. And the new emperor's first act of clemency was to release his two brothers-in-law from their slavery. And joy reigned supreme throughout the empire and feast followed feast, and

I too was there:
Astride of my saddle I tell you the news;
And armed with a spoon,
In case you should doze I'll tickle your nose!



THE ENCHANTED PIG



THE ENCHANTED • • PIG • •



ONCE upon a time there was an emperor who had three daughters. Being obliged to go to war, he called his children before him and said:—

“My dear children, I am forced to go to war, for the enemy has descended upon our territory with a great army. It grieves me sorely to leave you, but I hope that during my

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absence you will be good and discreet and that you will occupy yourselves with your accustomed household tasks. You have my permission to walk in the garden and through all the rooms of the palace except that one at the end of the right wing. If you enter this chamber, it will cause you sorrow."

"Be easy, dear father," replied the princesses. "We have never disobeyed your orders. Go in peace, and may God lead you to victory!"

When all was ready for the departure, the emperor embraced his daughters tenderly, recalled his counsels to their remembrance and gave the keys of the palace to the eldest. When the imperial cavalcade had disappeared from sight behind a cloud of dust, the princesses were plunged into grief and loneliness.

In order to distract themselves, they decided to work one third of the day, read during another third, and to walk in the fresh air for the rest of the time.

This they did and all went well. But before long one of those evil goblins, always jealous of the good fortune of obedient children, poked up his nose and whispered in the ear of the eldest

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and inspired her with discontent. So she said to the others:—

“Sisters, we do nothing all day long save spin and talk and read. Only a short time has passed since we were left alone, yet already have we visited every corner of the garden. We have gone through every room in the palace except one, and we have seen how beautifully and richly they are furnished. Now, why were we forbidden to enter the room at the end of the right wing? Surely there would be no harm for us to take just one little peep inside.”

“Oh, my dear sister!” exclaimed the youngest, “how can you suggest such an idea, how advise us to disobey our father? Since he has forbidden us to enter this room there must be a good reason.”

“But what harm can overtake us if we enter?” protested the second sister. “There are no dragons or other reptiles inside to devour us? And besides, how will our father ever know that we have disobeyed him?”

Thus talking and arguing, they arrived before the door of the forbidden room; the eldest, who kept the keys, thrust one of them in the lock and

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on turning it a little bit, crack! the door flew open and they stepped inside. And what do you think they saw? Only a large empty room, devoid of any ornaments; but in the middle of the chamber was a large round table, covered with a rich cloth and in the middle of the table was a great open book. The princesses impatiently approached the table, wishing to know the contents of the book. The eldest advanced first and this is what she read:—

“The eldest daughter of the emperor shall marry the son of the Emperor of the East.”

Next the second daughter took a peep within the book and read what follows:—

“The second daughter of the emperor shall marry the son of the Emperor of the West.”

The sisters laughed merrily and began teasing each other about these prophecies, but the youngest refused to glance at the book. Whereupon her sisters pushed her up to the table and held her there, until at last, timidly and fearfully she turned the page and read:—

“The youngest daughter of the emperor shall marry a *pig*.”

The young girl was as much overcome by

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these lines as if she had received a blow on the head. At first she was like one paralyzed, then she burst into sobs and tears. If her sisters had not supported her she would have fallen to the floor and hurt herself. Little by little she gained control of herself and her sisters consoled her as best they could.

“There, there!” said they, “how can you be worried by such a thing? Have you ever heard of a princess marrying a pig? What a child you are? Has not our father powerful enough armies to save you from a pig if such a disgusting beast should come courting you?”

The youngest princess wished to be comforted, but she felt very uneasy in the bottom of her heart. She could think of nothing but the strange book which predicted such happy destinies for her sisters and such a cruel and ridiculous fate for herself. Above all, she felt a great remorse in that she had disobeyed her dear father. She began to languish, and in a few days she was so changed that one could scarcely recognize her. She who had always been so fresh and gay, now became pale and morose. She avoided her sisters and refused to walk in the garden, or to gather

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garlands with which to bind her hair, or to sing ballads whilst at her weaving or embroidery.

About this time the emperor returned from the wars. He had achieved a brilliant victory and had driven the enemy far beyond the borders of his dominion, and because he was hungry for a sight of his daughters, he had returned as quickly as possible. A great multitude went out to meet him with trumpets, drums, and fifes, rejoicing in the home-coming of their ruler. As soon as he arrived in the city, even before entering his palace, the emperor repaired to church to give thanks to God for having brought him safely back.

Then turning toward his home, he encountered his daughters, who came out to welcome him, bearing wreaths and garlands of flowers. His joy passed all bounds when he saw them safe and sound, and the youngest princess did her best to appear as fresh and gay as her sisters. But she could not long deceive her father; in spite of all her efforts, the emperor soon remarked the change that had come over her during his absence. He suspected that his daughters had disobeyed him and his heart bled at the thought.

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So he questioned them severely and ordered them to speak nothing but the truth. Fearing to lie to their father they admitted their fault; upon hearing which the emperor was sore distressed and full of anger. But he mastered himself and tried to console the youngest princess, who, he could see, was pining away with grief. Now that the milk was spilled it would do no good to scold.

Time passed away and these events were almost forgotten, when one fine day the son of the Emperor of the East arrived at court and demanded the eldest princess in marriage. Her father granted this proposal with joy, and a splendid wedding followed, and after three days of feasting, the young couple were conducted with great pomp to the frontier.

Shortly afterward the second sister was married after the same fashion to the son of the Emperor of the West. Seeing that the prophecy of the book was being fulfilled, word for word, the youngest sister became more and more uneasy. She no longer wished to eat, nor to clothe herself in her silken robes, nor to go outside the palace. She preferred to die rather than to become the laughing-stock of the world through marrying a

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pig. But her father kept close watch over her so as to save her from death by her own hand, and tried to comfort her with his counsels.

One fine day, soon after the marriage of the second sister, who but a pig should arrive before the palace and present himself to the emperor? Opening his mouth, he spoke like a man:—

“I salute you, noble emperor! May you always be as bright and joyous as the sunrise on a clear day.”

“Welcome, friend,” replied the emperor. “What errand brings you hither?”

“I am come to beg in marriage the hand of your youngest daughter,” answered the pig.

The emperor was, indeed, astonished to hear such words from the mouth of a pig, and you may be sure that he hesitated to grant such a request. But when he heard that the court of the palace and all the streets of the city were filled with fierce pigs who came as an escort to their master, he had to give in, fearing sorcery. So the pig exacted a strict promise that the marriage was to take place in a week.

Overcome by these events the emperor could only counsel his daughter to submit to this mar-

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riage with as good grace as possible; for, said he: "The words of this suitor are not those of a pig, nor are his manners those of a swine. I do not believe he is, in reality, a filthy beast. He is surely the victim of enchantment, so it is best to go with him and God will not leave you to suffer for long."

"If you think thus, dear father, I will obey you," replied the young girl. "I will put all my trust in God, let come what will, for it is my fate, and I must submit."

And so the wedding-day arrived, and the ceremony was celebrated in secret. Then the pig took his bride and set out with her in one of the imperial carriages. Soon they came to a puddle in the road and the pig got out and rolled in the mud until he was all covered. Then mounting again beside his bride he begged her to kiss him. Poor little one! What could she do? Recalling her promise to her father, she took her handkerchief, wiped his muzzle, and kissed him.

They arrived at the pig's house at nightfall. It was situated in the midst of a dense forest, the trees of which towered over them like sentinels. They rested a little while, then they dined to-

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gether, and finally they lay down to sleep. During the night the princess perceived that it was a young man who lay by her side and not a pig. Remembering the prediction of her father, she was filled with hope and gave thanks to God. Her husband had pulled off the pig's skin in the night without her seeing it and before dawn he put it on again. Thus passed several nights, and the princess could not understand why her husband should be a pig during the day and a man during the night. He must, indeed, be the victim of enchantment.

Gradually she grew to love him, especially since she knew that she would soon be the mother of a little one and that he would be its father. Nevertheless, she grieved much over the thought that her baby, too, might be made to assume some strange and disgusting form. She was thinking sadly of all these things, one day, when an old sorceress passed before her door. So long had she been deprived of all human companionship that she called to the old dame to stop and talk with her a bit. The sorceress complied with her request and offered to tell her fortune and to sell her some simples. The poor princess, in order

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to test the dame's magic powers, demanded that she tell her why her husband should be a man during the night and a pig during the day.

"I can explain what is puzzling you, my pretty lady," answered the sorceress, "and you will then believe in my magic power. Also I will give you a remedy which will release your husband from his enchantment."

"Give it to me, my good woman, and I will pay you all you ask in exchange, for it is more than I can bear to have a husband in such plight."

"Very well, my pretty lady, take this thread, get up early in the morning whilst he is still asleep, tie it gently around his leg, draw it tight, and rest assured, my dear, that never again will your husband be a pig. I do not ask for money. I shall be repaid the moment I see you free from your trouble, for my heart bleeds for you, and I regret that I did not come sooner to your aid."

Then the sorceress departed, and the daughter of the emperor hid the thread carefully, and before dawn she arose, her heart beating painfully from the fear of waking her husband, and gently did she attach the cord to his leg. But when she

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drew the knot — crack! the thread broke because it was rotten. Her husband awakened with a start and cried: —

“What have you done, unfortunate woman? Only three days more and I should have been freed from my vile enchantment. Now, who knows how much longer I shall have to hide my real self under the filthy skin of a pig? Be assured you may never see me again until you have worn out three pairs of iron shoes and a staff of steel in seeking me, for I must go away!”

And so he disappeared from his wife’s sight.

When the poor princess found herself alone, she began to weep and lament in such fashion as to break one’s heart. But when she saw that her weeping was of no avail, she quitted her house and wandered in that direction which the pity of the Lord and the love of her husband pointed out to her. When she arrived in a town she had made for herself three pairs of iron sandals and a staff of steel. Thus prepared for her journey she set out in search of her husband.

She walked a long, long way, past nine kingdoms and nine seas; she crossed forests full of stumps as big as barrels, and oftentimes she

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stumbled against them and fell down, but each time she got up and went on her way. The branches of the trees struck her in the face and the bushes scratched her hands, but still she went ahead, without looking behind her. Worn out with her journey and broken down with grief, but with hope always in her heart, she at last arrived before a little house.

It was the home of Saint Monday. She knocked at the door and when it was opened she begged to be admitted so that she could lie down and rest, for she could go no farther. The mother of Saint Monday had pity on her, received her, and cared for her as tenderly as she could, and it was here that her baby was born.

Then the saint's good mother asked her how it was possible that she, a being from the other world, could have penetrated so far into these regions. And the unfortunate princess told her all her troubles and said:—

“Above all, I thank God that He led me here to your home, and I thank you, kind saint, for having had pity on me in the most painful moment of my life. I have only one prayer to make,

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and that is that you will ask your son, Saint Monday, to show me the way whereby I may find my husband."

"He does not know, my poor child," replied the good saint, "but go on toward the east and you will reach the home of the sun and perhaps he can tell you something."

Then she gave the princess a roasted hen to eat and told her to save carefully all its bones, because she would have need of them. And the poor princess, after thanking the kind saint once again, for her hospitality and her good advice, tied up the bones in her handkerchief, put on a fresh pair of iron sandals, grasped her staff of steel, placed her baby against her shoulder and set out on her painful pilgrimage.

She walked a long, long way, over plains of sand, and the road was so heavy that she advanced very slowly, but because of her unquenchable spirit she finally came out of the desert and reached the foot of high mountains full of precipices and ravines. She climbed from rock to rock, resting now and then upon a ledge, and so sharp were the stones that her hands and feet were soon covered with cuts and bruises.

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Soon she had clambered so high that she was above the clouds.

Finally, half dead with weariness, she arrived before a magnificent palace, the residence of the sun. She knocked at the door and begged shelter. The mother of the sun was, indeed, astonished to see a mortal in her domains. She wept with pity when she heard the princess's sad story, and afterwards she promised to question her son about the road upon which she might find her husband. Then she hid the princess in the cellar so that the sun might not see her upon his return, because he was always out of humor in the evening.

The next day the poor princess was in danger of being discovered because the sun could smell the presence of a being from the other world. But his mother quieted him with the assurance that it was only his imagination.

After his departure the princess came out from her hiding-place, and seeing the goodness with which the sun's mother had treated her, she took her courage in both hands and asked:—

“Why is your son always out of humor on his return, he who is so resplendent and who does so much good to mortals?”

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“I will tell you the reason,” answered his mother. “In the early morning he stands upon the sill of paradise and, radiant for an hour, he smiles on the whole earth. But during the day his humor becomes clouded through seeing the villainies of men, and in the evening he is gloomy and sad because he arrives at the gates of hell, for this is the road that he traverses every day, and it is from there that he returns to his home.”

Then the good dame told the princess that the sun knew nothing of her husband’s whereabouts, for if he lived in a thick forest, the sun’s beams could not penetrate it. But she advised her to seek out the wind, for he, surely, could point out the road whereon to find her husband. Then she, too, gave her a roasted hen to eat and told her to save carefully every bone, for she would have need of them. After that the poor wife set out, having put on her third pair of iron sandals, grasped her staff of steel, put the bones in her handkerchief, and placed her baby against her shoulder. In this fashion she sought out the home of the wind, and on the road she encountered many and terrible difficulties.

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Mountains from which spouted lava and flames stood in her way; icy plains strewn with heaps of snow blocked her passage; death menaced her on all sides, and only her will, upheld by the mercy of God, enabled her to overcome these obstacles. In the end, she arrived at a ravine within which might have been built seven cities, and it was here that the wind lived.

The wall that surrounded his dwelling had a gate upon which the young woman knocked, beseeching admittance. The mother of the wind had pity upon her and allowed her to enter and rest awhile. She, also, hid her away before the return of her son. The next day the kind dame told her that her husband lived in a thick forest which the axe had never touched. There he had built a little hut out of stumps placed one upon the other and bound together with willow withes. And he dwelt there all alone, fearing the wickedness of man.

She, also, gave the poor wife a roasted hen to eat and counseled her to save every bone, for she would have need of them. Then she directed her to watch the heavens and to follow the Milky Way at night until she should arrive at her goal.

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With tears in her eyes and fresh hope in her heart the princess thanked the mother of the wind for her kind welcome and her gracious counsels, and again set out on her painful journey, traveling by night and by day. She stopped neither to eat nor to sleep, for she was consumed by her ardent wish to rejoin the husband which fate had given her.

She walked and walked until the last pair of sandals were worn out. Then she threw them away and stepped barefoot amongst the clods of dried mud, paying no attention to the thorns and stones that wounded her feet. Finally she arrived in a lovely green glade on the edge of a forest. Her heart was glad at the sight of the flowers and grass which spread like a carpet before her. She stopped a little to rest, and when she heard the songs of birds her soul overflowed with longing for her husband. So she picked up her baby and slung the handkerchief of bones over her arm and hastened on her journey. The forest became thicker and thicker, and she felt in her heart that it was the same forest whereof the mother of the wind had spoken. She wandered therein for three days and three nights, until

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she became so broken with weariness that she fell down on the ground and lay without stirring for a whole night. Then, gathering up all her strength, and leaning on her staff of steel, which was nearly worn out, she advanced painfully, her heart full of pity for her baby who was crying with hunger.

She had not gone ten steps when she beheld a little hut which she felt sure belonged to her husband, and she drew near with a great effort. The hut had neither door nor window. There was an opening in the roof, but she looked in vain for a ladder. What could she do in order to enter? She thought and thought, but she found no solution to her difficulty and she was discouraged before this fresh obstacle. Then, suddenly, she remembered the bones which she had carried all the way, perhaps they would be useful to her now. So she took two of them in her hands and turned them over and over, not knowing what to do with them, when through some strange chance they stuck together, end to end. She took more, and they also stuck, until at last she had two strong bars which she leaned up against the hut. Then she took the small bones and put them to-

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gether and they, too, stuck, and with these she made the rounds of the ladder by means of which she mounted, step by step, until she was within one step of the roof. There the ladder ended and she had no more bones, so she cut off her little finger and by means of it made the last round.

Then, with her baby under her arm, she climbed over the roof and entered the house. Everything was in good order, and in one corner was a little cradle made of willow. In this she placed the baby and then sat down upon the bed to wait. Soon her husband arrived and he was greatly astonished to see the ladder against his hut — a ladder made of bones with a little finger at the end. Fearing fresh sorceries, he started to leave the hut, but God inspired him with courage to enter. So he changed himself into a pigeon and without touching the ladder he flew up and entered the house. There he saw his wife nursing her baby and he remembered that she was awaiting this little one when he left her. Therefore an inexpressible pity flooded his heart and immediately transformed him into a man. Poor little woman! What terrible trials must she have suf-

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fered before arriving at his abode! She was scarcely recognizable because of her sufferings and sorrows.

At sight of this strange man, the daughter of the emperor arose from the bed, trembling with fear, because she had never before seen her husband face to face in the light of day, and she was not sure that it was he. But he made himself known to her, and straightway she forgot all her troubles, for he was as tall and beautiful as a mountain pine. They began to speak, their child between them, and she recounted all her adventures. He wept and was greatly moved by the story of her trials.

In turn he told his story:—

“I am the son of an emperor. During a war which my father waged against his neighbors, the dragons, who were very wicked and who coveted his kingdom, I was the means of killing the youngest of them. It seems that fate had destined you for my bride; knowing which, the dragons’ mother, who was a sorceress so cunning that she could turn the sea into land with her magic, condemned me to wear the skin of a pig, thinking thus to deprive me of you. But with

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God's help I took you. The old woman who gave you the thread to fasten to my leg was the sorceress. Except for that, I should have escaped in three days' time from her power. But your action obliged me to wear the pig's skin for three years more.

“Now that we have suffered so much for each other, let us thank God and return to the home of our kindred. Without you, I should have lived the life of a hermit, and for that reason I chose this solitary spot which never before had been trod by the foot of man.”

So they kissed each other joyfully and promised to forget all their past troubles. The next day they arose at dawn and set out for the home of the young man. His parents wept with delight upon their arrival, and embraced them affectionately, and ordered a feast which lasted for three days.

After which they departed for the domain of the princess's father, who nearly lost his head with joy when he beheld them. He listened with interest to their stories, and then he said to his daughter:—

“Did I not tell you that I did not believe it

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was a pig who asked your hand in marriage?
You did well, my daughter, to obey me."

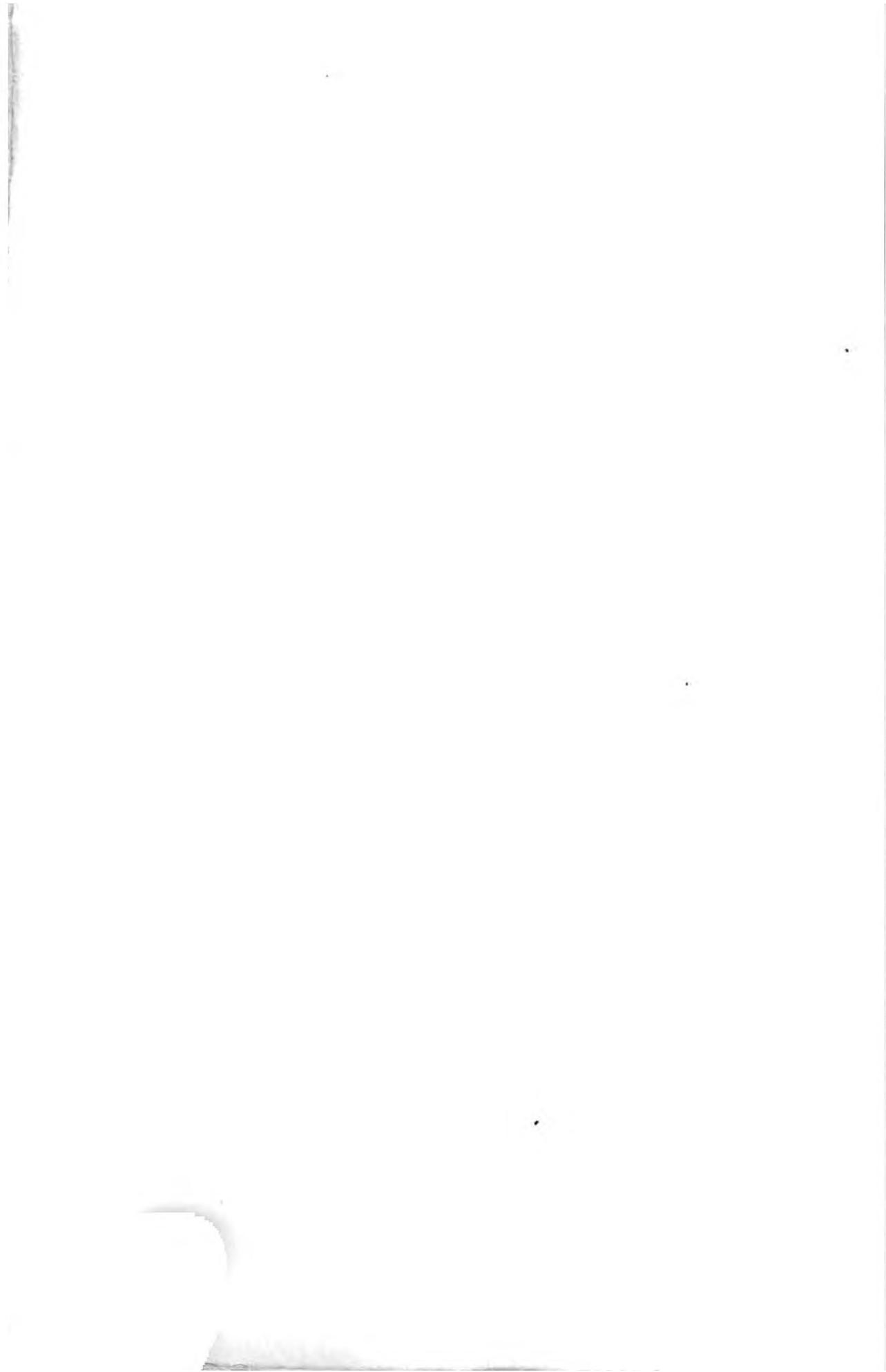
And being old and without a son, he gave up
his throne and placed his two children at the
head of the empire.

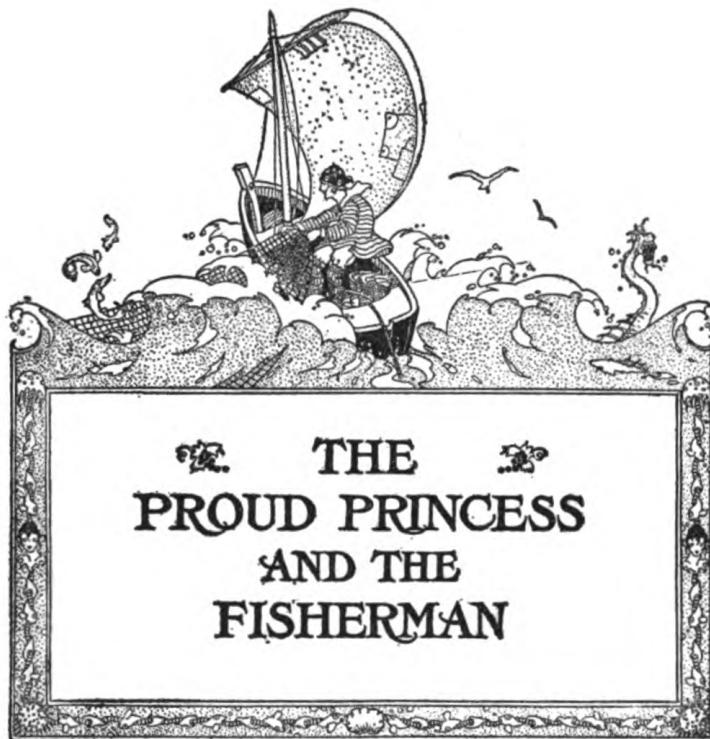
They reigned as one reigns when one is human,
for even emperors have their temptations and
their deceptions! And if they are not dead they
are still alive, reigning in peace!





**THE PROUD PRINCESS AND THE
FISHERMAN**





ONCE upon a time there was a fisherman, neither rich nor poor. He was a handsome young man, tall and stalwart. His blond mustache was as yellow as an ear of corn, and his thick, wavy hair was like a field of ripe wheat shimmering under the breeze.

One day, as he was carrying his baskets of fish past the royal palace, the daughter of the em-

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peror saw him and ordered him to be brought before her with his merchandise, and she bought all his fish for ten times its value. Such a piece of good luck was enough to turn the head of any man, and after this, whenever he had a fine catch of fish, the fisherman marched past the palace crying, "Fish for sale! Fish for sale!" — and the princess never failed to buy all he had.

Once in passing some coins into the fisherman's hand, she pressed it softly, and the great fellow blushed like a poppy, lowered his eyes and twisted his mustache in confusion. It was not long before they were exchanging words, and the princess learned that the fisherman was a bachelor. He responded politely to her questions, and as he was agreeable to talk to and pleasant to look upon, the daughter of the emperor fell deeply in love with him and gave him a purse full of gold with which to buy rich and beautiful clothing. Thus suitably clad he marched boldly into the palace and paid court to the princess.

He was so well-made and carried his garments so gallantly that the courtiers never guessed him to be other than a great noble. And so, being unable to smother the fire which love had kindled

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in her heart, the young princess declared her willingness to marry him. The rash fisherman hesitated an instant, knowing well that such a dainty morsel was not made for his mouth, but when he saw that she loved him so dearly, he forgot discretion and ended by yielding to his inclinations, all the time blushing and fumbling with his velvet cap which he held in his hand.

The emperor did not think much of this match, but as he loved his only daughter better than all the world besides, he let himself be moved by her prayers and consented to the engagement, and after a short time he gave them a royal wedding.

When the guests were seated at table, the servants brought the young couple, as was the custom, a soft-boiled egg, which they were expected to eat together. When the fisherman started to dip his bread in the dish, the princess stayed his hand saying: "Wait, my dear! It is I who must have the first dip because I am the daughter of an emperor and you are only a poor nobody of a fisherman."

Her husband answered not a word, but arose from the table and immediately vanished. The

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guests, ignorant of what had passed between the young couple, looked at each other in astonishment, and began to utter whispers of surprise, for of course nobody knew that the richly clad bridegroom was only a fisherman.

The princess bit her lips and repented her foolish behavior. She continued to eat, but she would have liked to throw each morsel over her shoulder, and not a single mouthful gave her any pleasure. After the meal she withdrew into her own room, but never a wink of sleep came to her all night long, so distressed was she over her rude blunder. What troubled her most of all was that her handsome fisherman had left her without saying a single word.

The next day she went to the emperor and told him her trouble, and declared she must set out at once in search of her husband. Her father was greatly distressed and tried to prevent her going, but she paid no attention to his pleading and passed on out of the palace gate while he was yet talking.

She sought all through the city, in the rich quarter and the poor quarter, but without success. Then she wandered from town to town,

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from village to village, until finally she learned that her fisherman had taken service at a certain inn. Here, after much searching, she found him, and running straight up to him, she began to make excuses and to offer proofs of her love. But her husband pretended not to know her, turned his head away, would not answer a single word, and went about his business. She followed him and begged him to say just one little word to her, but all in vain.

The innkeeper, seeing that his servant did everything cross-wise on account of this strange woman, said to her: "Why do you not let my servant alone? If you are a decent woman have the goodness to pack away from here. Besides, do you not see that the poor fellow is as dumb as an oyster?"

"He is no more dumb than the cock in the barnyard!" cried the princess. "He is my husband, and on account of a fault of which I was guilty he ran away from me on the day of our marriage."

All hands at the inn were moved by the words of the young woman, for they could see she was in earnest, but the innkeeper, himself, refused to

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believe such a strange tale, because, thought he, though a man be less talkative than a woman, it is not possible that this man, knowing how to talk, could have played dumb for a whole week. And every one remembered that he had not said a word during the eight days he had been there, answering only by signs, though he had already made himself valued because of his cleverness and energy.

In despair at not being able to win so much as a sound from her husband, and in order to appease the innkeeper, who threatened to send her away, the princess pledged the company that she would force the dumb man to talk in three days' time, provided she were left alone with him. If not, she would give herself up to be hanged on the gallows, for life was not worth having without the love of her fisherman.

The public scribe drew up a contract, which he showed to the governor of the town, and the young woman was called upon to sign her name, thus binding herself to her pledge. This being concluded, the term of three days was to begin on the morrow.

The fisherman knew nothing of this contract

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and so resolved to punish his proud wife a little longer. She tormented him continually with her pleading: "My well-beloved, apple of mine eye," she entreated, "I know my words were foolish and unkind, but I married you because I loved you and I promise I will never again offend you if you will only speak to me, just one little word, 'yes' or 'no,' and save me from the shame that is killing me! Come, now, soul of my soul, dear little husband, I know you have a right to be offended; I was a rude giddy-pate, but for the sake of my love, pardon my foolish behavior!"

But he turned his head away, shrugged his shoulders, laughed a foolish laugh, and pretended not to understand her. The first day passed and also the second; still not a word from the dumb man, only "Hi! hi! hi!" or "Ha! ha! ha!" as if he were a half-wit.

The third day came, and the princess was terribly alarmed, and wherever her husband went, there she was, fastened to his doublet, assailing him with a thousand prayers fit to touch the heart of a serpent, and imploring him to speak to her like a Christian. The fisherman began to be moved and came near giving in, but whenever he

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felt on the point of speaking, so much so that his tongue itched, he took to his heels, fearing lest his tears might betray him (for he loved his wife in spite of everything), and stayed in hiding until he could again appear as cold as ice.

Finally, the third day was up, and the fisherman had never let a word pass from behind his teeth. All the place was stirred up over the affair, and the towns-people talked of nothing except the strange behavior of the dumb servant and the sad plight of the pretty little woman who had mistaken the mute for her husband and so brought a terrible misfortune upon herself.

And now, behold, children, the scaffold put up in the market-place, and all the citizens collected to see the miserable end of the poor princess. Behold, also, the officials of the Government summoned from about the countryside and obliged, in spite of themselves, to get ready to carry out the contract which had been signed and sealed. Came the hangman, who called up the young woman for punishment because she had put her name to the paper and had not fulfilled her pledge. Finally, see her turn for the last time to

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her husband, but she might as well speak to a stick or a stone.

Convinced that there was no chance for her, she unfastened her blond plaits, which streamed in the wind as she walked toward the place of execution, and began to lament in heart-breaking fashion. And the onlookers, big and little, wept, too, because they could do nothing to help her. Reaching the foot of the gallows, with a last hope she looked once more upon her husband, who stood near by, and sobbing out loud she cried: "My dear little husband, save me from death! Just one little word will suffice!"

The hangman was at hand, with a stout cord greased in tallow. Two knaves led the princess up the ladder and the cord was passed about her neck. In the twinkling of an eye there would be an end to the poor woman. But at the very moment when the knaves were about to push the ladder from under her, leaving her to hang betwixt heaven and earth, the dumb man stretched out his hand and cried:—

"Stop! Stop!"

The onlookers were stupefied. Tears of joy ran down their faces, and the hangman himself,

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though paid by the job, had not the heart to be disappointed, and took away the cord from the young woman's neck.

Then the dumb man, fixing his eyes upon his wife, demanded of her three times:—

“Will you ever again call me a ‘poor nobody of a fisherman’?”

And three times she replied:—

“Forgive me, dear husband, only once was I guilty of such unkindness, and never will I be again!”

“Then let her come down, good men,” the fisherman ordered, “for she is indeed my wife.”

And he took her by the hand and they set out for home together, where they continued the celebration of their wedding, so rudely broken off. And they lived happily ever after and are living still, unless they are dead!

Whilst I,
A wonder-seeker hither and yon,
Mount my saddle and, pouf! — am gone!



THE GOLDEN TWINS





THE GOLDEN TWINS



ONCE upon a time, on his return to his own country after having traveled all over the world, the son of a great knight passed by a hemp-dresser's hut where three pretty sisters were dressing hemp. As he trudged along some chance words from their lips caused him to prick up his ears, and turning in their direction he said, "What were you talking about, my dears?"

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And the eldest, with a burst of laughter, replied: "I said something like this: If the young knight who is passing by would only marry me, I could make his home beautiful even though I had nothing but a spindle full of flax."

The second sister in her turn replied: "I made this remark: If the young knight who is passing by would only marry *me*, I could feed all his clan, even though I had nothing but a buttered biscuit."

And the youngest, in her turn, said: "I was thinking out loud; If the young knight who is passing by would only marry *me*, I would give him two beautiful golden babies."

The young man remained silent a moment, thinking; then, approaching the sister who had spoken last, he said: "Young maiden, your words please me the best of all. If you wish to follow me, you shall be my wife, but take care that you keep your promise."

At such an offer only a simpleton would have hesitated, especially as the young man was — all joking aside — as tall and straight as a young pine tree. So the maiden of his choice blushed like a peony, held out her hand to him, and

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answered: "Agreed! and may good luck follow us! If we are made for each other I will not fail you any more than you will fail me."

So they set out, and the young knight led his sweetheart home to a beautiful palace, the like of which she had never seen before. There they celebrated their wedding with a splendor that was the envy of the seven surrounding kingdoms, and afterwards they set up housekeeping. The husband gave his wife as waiting-maid a certain gypsy who lived in the palace and of whom he thought very highly. But the moment she laid eyes on the wife, this female crow began to wish her evil.

Months passed away, and one day the wife of the young knight told him that, according to her promise, she would soon become the mother of golden twins. He was filled with joy and ordered a beautiful cradle made for the babies.

When the day of their birth approached, the husband was away on a journey. So the gypsy servant told her mistress that, according to the custom of the country, she must go up into the topmost room of the house, far away from all her family and attendants, and depend upon her services alone to receive the beautiful golden

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babies (for in this way the wicked woman planned to carry out her plot in secret).

“Very well,” agreed the young wife; “I will follow the custom of the country, since custom there is.” For the innocent young creature did not suspect the plans of the gypsy; loving everybody herself, how could she think that any one harbored evil thoughts toward her? So she climbed up into the topmost room of the house, made ready to receive the golden babies, and there they were born. But the gypsy was waiting near by, and hastily seizing the little ones, before their mother could so much as look at them, she placed them in a sieve which she had at hand, ran down the stairs to the stable-yard, and stowed them away under the dung-heap, where the poor little creatures soon perished. Then she placed two newborn puppies in the sieve, ran back to her mistress, and said:—

“Look, mistress! Here are your babies!”

And the poor mother cried out, “Oh, it is not possible!”

But the wicked woman insisted: “You have only to look and see for yourself. You are a witch and these are the children of a witch.”

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The arrival of the husband cut short the discussion, and the gypsy, boldly running forward, held out for him to see the sieve wherein whimpered the little puppies.

“Look! look!” she cried; “this is the beautiful present that your wife promised you. It was lucky, indeed, my lord, that you thought of placing a discreet and devoted servant like myself near this woman; otherwise think how this story would have been spread about and how everybody would have mocked you!”

At these words, and at the sight of the ugly little beasts, the knight flew into a terrible rage, and to punish his wife, he drove her out of his house and made her become a servant, while he took the gypsy woman as wife in her place. The innocent victim of the cruel plot knew that an unjust punishment had overtaken her, but being helpless to put matters right, she kept silent and resigned herself to wait until the truth should one day be made clear.

Some time passed away, until one day, out of the dung-heap wherein the gypsy had hidden the twins, there sprang up two apple trees whose golden fruit shone so brightly that even on the

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darkest night a light spread all about them like the rays of the sun. These trees grew as much in one day as other trees grow in a year, and quickly became tall and strong.

Therefore the gypsy, who lived in terror of the discovery of her wicked deed, and who feared the beauty of the apple trees, said one day to the knight: "I have an idea! Let us cut down those apple trees near the stable and use them to make new slats for our bed, for the old ones are about to give way."

"Cut down those trees!" cried her husband. "Do you not see that they are as beautiful as trees in a dream and that no one else has any to compare with them? What ever gave you such an idea?"

"As you like!" she replied, "but you will end by cutting them, for I will never eat bread and salt with you again until you do."

Not being able to withstand the vixen for long, the knight had the trees cut down and made into two slats for the bed. Now, soon after the couple went to bed one night, the gypsy heard the slats begin to talk, — for I must tell you that the souls of the golden twins had passed from the trees

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into the slats, that of the boy into one and that of the girl into the other.

“Dado,”¹ said the boy, “is the bed very heavy on top of you?”

“Yes, brother, very heavy, because I hold up the gypsy. Is it heavy on you, too?”

“No, not too heavy, because our father sleeps on top of me.”

The gypsy realized that she would be ruined if the knight overheard the slats talking, so she dared not close her eyes all night. At daybreak she awakened her husband and said:—

“Listen! I am going to throw away these wretched slats. Because of them I have been tormented with bad dreams all night.”

“What! Destroy those fine slats! You must be crazy!” cried her husband.

“Fine slats or not, if you don’t get rid of them, I will jump off a precipice!” she threatened.

So, wishing peace above all things, the knight had the slats cut up into kindling-wood. Then the sly creature, having carefully closed all the windows, threw the kindling into the fire. But two sparks flew out of the chimney and fell in the

¹ Dado = a term of endearment between brother and sister.

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garden, and where the sparks fell there grew two tufts of basil. Now the knight had a pet lamb which played in the courtyard of the house, and one day it escaped into the garden and nibbled up the two tufts of basil. Immediately, its wool became all golden, and one could not have found such a lamb anywhere else in all the world. At the sight of the beautiful little animal, the gypsy turned yellow with jaundice, for she began to fear she could never escape her punishment. Nevertheless, she remained calm, waiting a chance to do away with the lamb.

One day, when the knight was in a fine humor, she said, smacking her lips, "How I would like to eat the flesh of that tender little lamb!"

The knight was dumfounded and cried, "Get rid of that idea at once, woman; I will never let you kill my lamb!"

The wicked woman knew she would never get her way except by trickery, so she pretended to be very ill. For a whole week she disturbed the knight with her plaints and her groans, until one night she pretended to awaken with a start, and when her husband asked her what was the matter, she answered, "I dreamed that a magician

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had just told me that if I wanted to get well, I must have that lamb butchered and eat its heart and its liver."

"How you do go on, woman! Butcher my lamb, indeed! Better send for all the sorcerers in the kingdom and maybe one of them can give you a remedy that will really cure your ailment."

"I have already found a remedy," replied the gypsy stubbornly, "and if you refuse me its help, it is because you want me to die."

Being at the end of his wits, the knight gave in and ordered the lamb to be killed and sent to the kitchen. Now, the cunning gypsy, determined that every precaution should be taken this time, hurried to the kitchen and took charge of the lamb herself. She seized its liver and heart, being careful not to break off even a little morsel, and, giving them into the hands of a trusted servant, she ordered her to take them to the river to wash them, and threatened her with the loss of her life should she lose even a tiny particle in the stream. But during the operation, nobody knows how, a little piece of the heart was broken off, and the servant, terribly frightened, threw the fragment into the river. Then she returned.

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to the house, and, saying nothing about the accident, handed the heart and liver of the lamb to her mistress.

The next day the mother of the twins went down to the river to fill her pitcher, and as she sadly looked upon the water flowing by, she saw, seated on a little mound near the bank, two children who were playing with golden apples. All during the afternoon she watched them, with strangely throbbing heart, because she felt that perhaps they might be her own little ones. Returning late to the house, she received a cruel beating at the hands of the gypsy.

“Do not punish me, mistress,” she pleaded; “I could not come back any sooner, because I was feasting my eyes on a sight that I could have gazed upon for a whole week without stopping.”

Moved by curiosity, the gypsy ran to the river and there she, too, saw the children playing. Like the mother, she could not tear her glance away. Never before had such beauty dazzled her wicked eyes. It bewitched her to see these lovely children frolic and dance on the little mound near the river-bank. But their beauty did not hinder her from harboring evil thoughts

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and she began to plan how she could do away with them.

Now, there began to collect upon the river-bank a great crowd of people, drawn there by the sight of the golden twins, and they uttered "oh's" and "ah's" of admiration. Amongst these good folks was an old woman who was moved by a desire to adopt this wonderful boy and girl. More wary than the rest, she returned betimes the next morning, bringing with her a little distaff and a little cane, and, advancing to the edge of the water, she held them out to the children, calling to them in her sweetest tones. And the twins, seeing the toys, ran toward the old woman. The boy seized the cane and the girl the distaff, while the good woman, delighted with her success, took each by the hand and led them to her home. She clothed them in some plain, clean garments and began to care for them as best she could.

Some time after, it happened that the knight arranged a gathering to which all the children of the village were bidden to come and string beads. You may be sure that the old woman came and brought her beautiful twins. The reunion began

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with games and fortune-telling. Finally the knight arose and said: "Enough nonsense now, my children. Let us all be quiet for awhile, and each one of you shall tell a story."

The boys and girls clapped their hands at this suggestion, and one by one each told his nicest story, until at last came the turn of the golden twins. But God had made them timid and they tried to excuse themselves. "Sir Knight," said they, "what can we tell? We do not know a single story."

"My dears," he replied, "don't be afraid. It is your turn now. Tell anything you know and tell it the best you can."

Then the boy began:—

"Once upon a time there were three sisters who were hemp-dressers, and one day a young knight passed by their hut. (Slip on the string, little beads!) The eldest sister said, 'If this young knight will marry me, I will make his home beautiful even though I have only a spindle full of flax.' (Slip on the string, little beads!) The next one said, 'If the young knight will marry me, I will feed all his clan, even though I have only a buttered biscuit.' (Slip on the string,

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little beads!) And the youngest sister said, 'If the young knight will marry me, I will give him two beautiful golden babies! (Slip on the string, little beads!) And the knight took for his wife the youngest sister and gave her as a servant a gypsy woman —"

The wicked gypsy, foreseeing the end of the story, interrupted the boy brusquely:—

"A silver toy
For your silence, boy!"

But the knight replied:—

"A golden toy
If you speak out, boy!"

And the child continued: "Time passed and the hour of the babies' birth arrived and the wife of the knight demanded a nurse. (Slip on the string, little beads!) Her husband was away on a journey, so the wicked gypsy told her that she, herself, would be the nurse, and when the little ones saw the light of day, the cruel plotter stole them and carried them away in a sieve and hid them under the dung-heap, and brought back in their place two little puppies, which she showed to the knight on his return, telling him that his wife was a witch and these were her

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children. (Slip on the string, little beads!) The knight was enraged and drove his wife out of the house and married the gypsy woman in her place, and the poor wife became the servant of the gypsy. Then from out of the dung-heap in the stable-yard grew two golden apple trees. Hardly had the gypsy seen them than she teased her husband until he had them cut down and made into bed slats. During the night, when the knight and his gypsy wife were asleep in the bed, the slats began to speak: 'Dado, is the mat-tress heavy?' 'Yes, very heavy, for the gypsy sleeps on my side. And is it heavy on you?' 'No, not on me, for our father sleeps on my side.' (Slip on the string, little beads!)"

Again the gypsy broke in, crying:—

"A silver toy
For your silence, boy!"

But the knight cried, too:—

"A golden toy
If you speak out, boy!"

And the child continued: "The cruel woman, who alone had heard what the bed slats said, tormented her husband until he had the slats cut in little pieces which she threw into the fire. But

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two sparks escaped from the chimney and fell in the garden, and on this spot grew up two tufts of basil. Now, the knight had a pet lamb which one day escaped into the garden, and there coming upon the two tufts of basil, cropped them, and immediately its wool became like gold. — (Slip on the string, little beads!) When the female devil saw this fresh miracle, she fell ill and begged her husband to kill the lamb, declaring that she would die unless she were given to eat of the lamb's heart and liver. Her husband was unwilling to kill his lamb, but she insisted, so much so, that to have peace, he finally consented, for the wicked woman's tongue never ceased clacking. And so she sent her servant to the river to wash the lamb's entrails, cautioning her not to let the least bit of the heart or liver escape from her hands, but the servant, in washing them, broke off a tiny piece and it floated away in the current. The morsel was caught on a little hillock in the stream from whence we sprang up, my sister and I. (Slip on the string, little beads!) ”

And, oh, wonder of wonders! upon these words, all the little beads hopped up out of the

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tray and slipped on the string without the aid of the boy's fingers, and before everybody's eyes the necklace of beads was finished!

The wicked gypsy had been crying, over and over again:—

“A silver toy
For your silence, boy!”

But every time the knight made reply:—

“A golden toy
If you speak out, boy!”

So the child continued: “A good old woman took us home with her, where she cared for us as if we were her own children, until this very evening, when she brought us to the house of my lord knight, and here we are, as beautiful and strong as when we were brought into the world by our little mother.”

Hardly able to believe their ears, all the company gazed with wonder on the child who had told this strange story. Then the boy, having finished, cried out, “If you do not believe me, look and you will be convinced!”

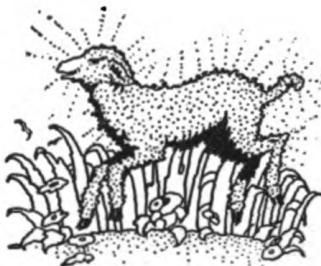
And he and his sister stripped off their garments, and their bodies shone like gold, so that every eye was dazzled. Seeing this, their father

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sprang toward them, seized them in his arms, and recognized them as his children. Their mother also approached and pressed them to her heart, and all four wept with joy, blessing God for having brought them together at last.

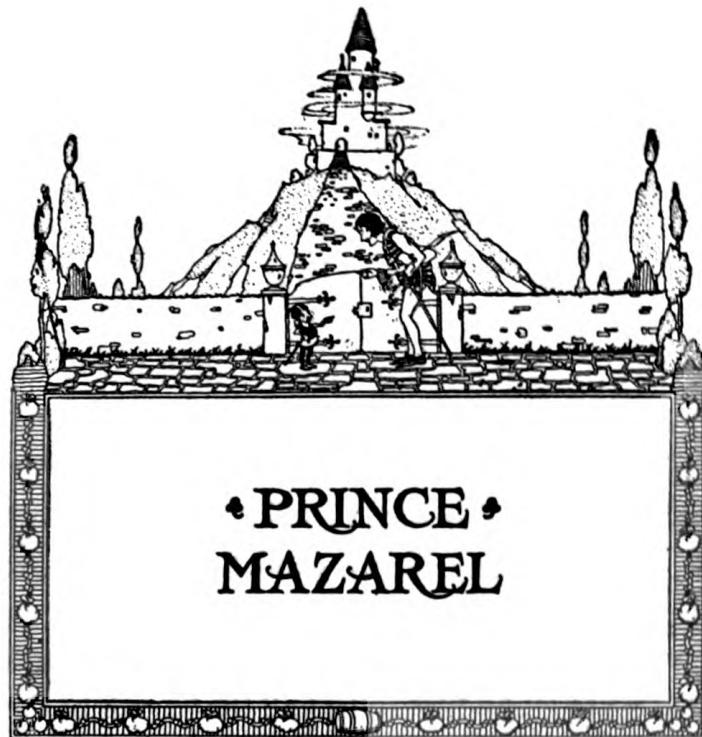
And the knight, enraged at the wicked plot of the gypsy, ordered a wild stallion to be led out from his stables, and the cruel woman was fastened with a sack of nuts to the horse's tail, and the lackeys lashed the beast and set him loose on the highroad, and every time a nut fell from the sack a piece of the gypsy's flesh fell off her bones, until finally there was nothing left of her but dust.

Thus ends my tale,
And away I fly,
To gather fresh lore
'T wixt earth and sky!





PRINCE MAZAREL



NCE upon a time there was a vagabond who was as poor as Job's turkey. After having wandered over many countries, he returned to the land of his birth, with more shrewdness in his head than money in his pockets, for he had knocked about among strange peoples and had been rubbed through the big sifter and the little one.¹

¹ Popular expression, meaning that he had suffered much.

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He would have liked to set himself up in business, but he had no capital. One day he found three peas lying in his path; he picked them up, weighed them in the palm of his hand, and after looking at them a long time, he finally said out loud:—

“If I plant these three peas, I shall harvest a hundred; and the next year a thousand, and if I plant these thousand, I shall have no one knows how many. In this way I shall become rich, but to hasten the day of my good fortune I know what I shall do.”

Therefore he went before the emperor and prayed him to let him collect all the barrels in the empire. The ruler thought him enormously rich, since he had need of so many barrels. All the more so after he had talked with him for a space, for the vagabond was a great boaster and told many yarns. He talked so glibly and so plausibly that it was as if pearls fell from his lips. He recounted all that he had seen in foreign lands, with many tales about the strange folks and their customs; in fact, there was nothing under heaven that he did not talk about, and when he saw his ruler listening to him with open mouth, he lost all

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discretion and claimed to be the master of castles, herds, and countless riches.

The emperor believed all he said and replied thus to the vagabond:—

“I see you are a traveled man, both wise and noble; therefore, if it suit you, I will give you my daughter in marriage.”

At this the vagabond regretted his vain boasting, for how could he refuse the offer of his emperor and how could he make good his claims? However, after hesitating some time, he regained his assurance and replied:—

“Glorious emperor, I accept joyfully the honor you have done me and I will strive to be worthy of your lovely daughter.”

So the preparations for the wedding began, and in a short time the marriage was celebrated in the imperial palace, and the young couple took up their residence there.

A week passed, then another, then a third, and still no mention was made of the vagabond's wealth. The emperor began to regret his hasty action, but what could he do?

His son-in-law could tell by their manner toward him that the courtiers doubted his rank and

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wealth. He was so mortified that he could not sleep, and he turned over in his mind all sorts of plans for escape from his shameful plight. Early one morning, after a sleepless night, he left the palace without any one seeing him. He was wandering aimlessly about, brooding over his troubles, when, all of a sudden, from I know not where, a little red dwarf appeared before him and said:—

“If I help you out of your scrape, what will you give me?”

“Whatever you ask,” replied the poor vagabond.

“There are nine of us brothers,” replied the dwarf. “Each one of us will ponder a saying and if you divine all nine of them, you may have our fortunes. If not, you must give us your first-born.”

The poor vagabond, at the end of his wits, agreed to the bargain in the hope that he should find some way out of his dilemma.

The little red dwarf then showed him all his possessions and those of his brothers — their castles, their herds, and their acres, which lay near by, and he instructed the cowherds, the

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shepherds, and the servants what to say should any one ask to whom all these riches belonged. Then he disappeared.

I must not forget to tell you that, in the road, outside the palace gate, the vagabond had met a poor beggar, and in pity on his rags and misery, he had offered him charity; but the old man refused his alms, and begged instead to be taken into his service. His request was granted and the beggar followed him inside.

The emperor's son-in-law now announced that he meant to take his wife on a visit to his own domains, and the emperor received the news with joy, for he had long doubted that his son-in-law had so much as a clay hut. So he ordered that an escort be chosen to conduct the young couple with all suitable honors to their new home, and at daybreak the courtyard of the palace was filled with knights, soldiers, and courtiers. The old man who had been a beggar took charge of the arrangements. He announced that he was chief steward and that his master was Prince Mazarel,¹ and everybody praised him for his energy, cleverness, and loyalty. And so Prince

¹ Mazarel, in Roumanian, "Small-Peas."

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Mazarel and his wife set out for their domains, accompanied by the emperor and empress; and the chief steward went ahead to point out the way.

But Prince Mazarel was as gloomy and downcast as if some one had dipped him in cold water. All his doubts centered around the bargain with the red dwarf, and he wondered how he could read the minds and divine the sayings of the nine brothers.

Finally they arrived at the estates of the little red men, and on one side was a lovely meadow and on the other a splendid forest, so green and beautiful that it was like being in paradise. As soon as the warden saw the party approaching, he saluted them, casque in hand.

"To whom belong these lands?" asked the emperor.

"To Prince Mazarel," replied the warden.

The emperor was very happy when he saw that his son-in-law was really a man of wealth. They went still farther and met great numbers of sheep and cattle. And the emperor questioned the farmhands, one after another, and all of them replied that the flocks and herds belonged to Prince Mazarel.

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When they arrived at the castle of the nine dwarfs, the emperor was astonished at the splendors before his eyes. The party was received at the gates with music from many strange instruments, and on entering, they were dazzled by the interior of the castle, which was richly ornamented with precious stones, paintings, and tapestries. A great feast awaited them and the wine that was served inspired heavenly dreams.

After having wished every possible good thing to their children, the emperor and empress set out for home, full of admiration for the riches and possessions of their son-in-law.

But Prince Mazarel wilted under the burden of his cares.

When night came the old man said to him, "Master, you are now convinced of my loyalty, but I can render you still further service."

"Do you speak truly, old man?" questioned the Prince.

"Do not doubt me for an instant, master. Accord me one favor only. Let me sleep in a corner of your bedchamber, no matter where, and I will advise you how to answer when any one calls you or makes a disturbance."

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“So be it,” agreed Prince Mazarel.

And thus it was.

After they had sought their beds and put out their lights they heard a heavy rumbling like the approach of a storm. And then a voice, hoarse and hard:—

“Prince Mazarel, Prince Mazarel!”

“What do you want?” answered the old man.

“I want Prince Mazarel.”

“It is the same thing,” answered the old man.

“My master sleeps, he is worn out.”

Then many voices were heard disputing and afterwards again the first voice:—

“Prince Mazarel, Prince Mazarel!”

“What do you want?” replied the old man.

“What is our first saying?”

“Your first saying is about the moon.”

“Is it the Prince who answers?”

“The Devil it is!” replied the old man.

Then followed a noise like thunder, and another voice:—

“What is our second saying?”

“Man has two eyes for seeing.”

“What is the third?”

PRINCE MAZAREL

“Where there are three women, best not meddle.”

“Is it the Prince who speaks?”

“The Devil it is!” replied the old man.

“What is the fourth?”

“A cart with four wheels goes smoothly.”

“What is the fifth?”

“The hand with five fingers strikes hard.”

“Is it the Prince who answers?”

“The Devil it is!” replied the old man.

Then was heard again a voice which called Prince Mazarel, — but it was not a voice of thunder this time, only a little voice that whispered and that could hardly be heard.

“What is the sixth saying?” it quavered.

“A whistle with six holes makes much noise,”
replied the old man.

“What is the seventh?”

“Where seven brothers are, best not break in!”

“Is it the Prince who speaks?”

“The Devil it is!” replied the old man.

“What is the eighth?”

“A plough with eight oxen turns up much earth.”

“What is the ninth?”

PRINCE MAZAREL

“Where there are nine maids the house is not swept.”

“Is it the Prince who answers?”

“The Devil it is!” replied the old man.

Prince Mazarel had heard everything and he could not sleep a wink all night, even after the noise had ceased for a long time and a quiet reigned in which one could have heard the buzzing of a fly. He waited impatiently for day-break, but when morning came the old man had disappeared.

So, thankful to be still alive, Prince Mazarel arose and went out of the castle, and what do you think he saw? Nine red dwarfs lying stiff and dead in the courtyard, and he ordered their bodies thrown out to the crows.

After which he thanked God for having saved him from shame.

But a soft voice was heard whispering:—

“The pity that you had for the poor beggar saved you. Be always merciful.”



THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES



THE QUEEN OF • THE FAIRIES •



ONCE upon a time, long, long ago (and if this story were not true, it would never have been told), when all the poplar trees were covered with pears, and the willows with nuts; when bears switched their tails like cows; when wolves and lambs loved each other like brothers; when fleas with ninety-nine pounds of iron on each foot hopped high up in the sky and brought back wonderful sto-

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ries; when flies wrote rhymes like this on the walls —

“A tap on the nose for all who doze;
Who doubts my lore shall hear no more” —

once upon a time, then, there was a great and powerful emperor who had three sons. When these princes were old enough to get married, their father, as was right and proper, spent much time in planning to find them the best and prettiest sweethearts in the kingdom, so they might be as happy as princes are supposed to be. By day he thought of their future and by night he dreamed of it, and finally one morning very early he called them to him and led them up on the top of a tower which stood in the middle of the garden, and said: —

“Seize your bows, my children, tighten them and let fly your arrows, and wherever they fall, there you shall find your fortunes.”

And the princes seized their bows. “Our father knows what he is about,” thought they and asked no questions. So one after another they sped their arrows, and the arrow of the eldest buried itself in the roof of the palace of a neighboring emperor; that of the second lodged

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in the door of a brave knight of the kingdom; while that of the third and youngest prince mounted straight up into the sky. So high did it mount that their necks ached from watching it, and their eyes were almost blinded, until suddenly it turned and dropped to the horizon and lost itself far, far away in an immense forest.

The eldest son followed his arrow and brought back for his wife the daughter of the neighboring emperor. The second went away and returned with the good and beautiful daughter of the knight. Last of all departed the youngest, Fet-Frumos, a handsome and gallant prince. He wandered a long time almost across the world, until he reached the immense forest where his arrow had disappeared like a grasshopper in a field of corn. Finally, after searching right and left he saw the arrow in the top of a tree, so high, so high, that he wondered how he would ever get it, for this tree was an old, old oak which God Himself had planted.

Not being able to encircle the trunk with his legs, he grasped the rough, projecting bark and pulled himself up to the lowest branches. From

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this point, hoisting himself by his arms, and creeping up with his feet or knees pressed against the trunk, he managed at last to reach the top of the great tree and seized his arrow. He slipped it into his doublet and began to scramble down, just as badly off as he was at the start.

Full of disappointment, he thought of the long journey he had taken for nothing. After all, how could a man pluck good fortune from the top of a tree? And when had a man ever found a sweetheart like a bird in its branches? However, he could not go back empty-handed to his father, the emperor. Arguing thus, and feeling very sheepish, he was about to let himself down from the lowest branch, when an owl flew out from a hole in the trunk and fastened itself to his shoulder. He tried to shake it off, but the harder he shook the tighter the bird clung. He plunged into the midst of the bushes, he rubbed his back against the big rocks in his efforts to get rid of the ugly little monster. But neither pushing nor pulling, neither rolling nor rubbing, had any effect on the spiteful creature, who clung to his flesh in the fiercest fashion, holding on tight with its beak and claws.

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At last, quite worn out, the poor young man resigned himself to his fate, and set out for home with the bird still gripping his back and with six others, equally ugly and spiteful, beating the air about him as he walked. So he trudged along sadly and painfully in the midst of these creatures of ill omen, and in the end he managed to arrive at the emperor's palace after dark, fearing to be seen by the urchins of the town, who would have pestered him cruelly with their taunts and laughter.

Fet-Frumos occupied a beautiful room in the middle of the palace. As soon as he had stolen in there very softly — whisk! whir! the six owls scattered in every direction, and the seventh one, which had so spitefully fastened itself to the poor prince's skin, suddenly let go and hid itself cunningly in the bed.

The poor young man would have liked to go to bed himself, but he was afraid to drive out the wicked bird, so he waited and waited, not knowing what to do. He racked his brain for an idea, until finally he decided to do nothing at all except to leave all this winged crew in peace whilst he

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confided himself to the care of the good God and waited to see the end of his adventure.

Then, nearly dead with weariness, after his long journey and all its strange happenings, he stretched himself on the edge of the bed, placed his head softly on the pillow, and was soon as fast asleep as if he had been cracked on the skull with a pick-axe.

Behold! my dear children, what a surprise awaited him the next morning! Near him, under the silk coverlid of the bed, between the fine linen sheets, lay a fairy, the queen of the fairies, the prettiest creature in the world, beautiful enough to turn the head of a saint; and at the side of the bed stood six other fairies, maids in waiting, each one prettier than the other. And, what do you think? In the corner of the room like a heap of rags (oh, what a mischievous joke!) lay the six owl-skins!

When the queen of the fairies appeared with the prince, everybody in the palace marveled at her grace and beauty, which was so dazzling that it made the eyes ache. Except for that they would have gazed at her all day long.

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Soon the wedding day of the eldest prince arrived, and Fet-Frumos helped entertain the guests, but not the fairy. She refused to accompany him for some reason or other. Will any one ever know why?

After the ceremony the young men began to dance the *hora*.¹ Without much spirit, because of the absence of his dear sweetheart, the youngest prince joined the dancers, but just as the first young girl broke the circle to enter the dance, behold! out glided the fairy, from I know not where, and took her place by the side of Fet-Frumos, who became radiant with joy and pride, because there was not another woman like her in all the empire, no, nor in all the empires of the world.

And all the wedding guests stood stock-still with wonder at so much beauty, and all the princes and knights who had begun to dance crowded around the six fairy waiting-maids, and elbowed each other in their efforts to capture these pretty creatures as partners for the dance. Thus they made merry until evening, and at the table the fairy sat next the young prince, and the

¹ National dance of the Roumanians.

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feasting lasted until the stroke of midnight, when the guests set out for home, and the princes went to bed and slept as princes should. But in the morning when Fet-Frumos got up and saw the owl-skins still lying in the corner, he shivered a little as he thought how much he had suffered from the fairies' mischievous tricks.

The marriage of the second prince was celebrated soon afterward, and again the youngest prince went to the wedding all alone. As before, the fairy arrived suddenly from some place and without losing a minute, hip-hop! she sprang into the *hora* near her sweetheart. And Fet-Frumos felt his heart swell with joy and pride to see how this charming morsel made the mouths of the princes and knights water with envy. They, poor fellows, had to eat the strawberry leaves instead of the fruit, and console themselves by dancing with the fairy waiting-maids instead of their queen!

That evening was held the grand *kief*,¹ and in the midst of the celebration, I know not what odd idea passed through the prince's head, but

¹ A feast with music, accompanied by much revelry and drinking.

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behold! he jumped up from the table, ran into his room, snatched up the wretched owl-skins, and threw them in the fire. Then he returned quietly to his place.

At this very moment the guests began to feel trouble in the air.

One of the fairy waiting-maids said suddenly:

“Mistress, there is danger somewhere!”

Another one exclaimed:—

“Mistress, I smell something burning; I fear we are lost!”

The queen of the fairies interrupted:—

“Be quiet, my poppets! Is this the time to tell me such foolishness?”

But soon another one cried:—

“Some one has wickedly betrayed us!”

This time the fairy sniffed a little as if she smelled feathers burning, and made a signal of distress and anger to her waiting-maids, upon which all left their places with a rush, and suddenly where there had been seven fairies were now seven doves, and the dove which had been the fairy queen said to Fet-Frumos:—

“You are an ingrate, prince. Empty-handed I found you, empty-handed I leave you, and you

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will never see me again until you have accomplished something that no son of a woman has ever before accomplished."

With that the seven doves flew up in the air and disappeared from before the eyes of all the wedding guests.

The young prince was broken-hearted, and refused to eat any more in spite of the pleas of his friends. His father and brothers tried to comfort him for his loss, but he stayed apart and kept his eyes fastened upon the spot in the sky where the doves had disappeared, and he would not return to the feast.

Next day, as soon as it was light, he said good-bye to his family and set out to hunt for his sweetheart, for he felt that he could not live without her. And now you shall hear the story of his wanderings.

He trudged across valleys and toiled up mountain-sides, he plunged into deep forests where never before had a hunter risked his life, but never a sign of the doves did he find. How he chafed and fretted, poor boy, in his efforts to move heaven and earth!

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His heart ached with disappointment and burned with love. Always to wander, restless and raging, like a lion or a dragon, and always in vain! Sometimes he thought of putting an end to his life by throwing himself into a pit or by beating his skull against the sharp edges of the rocks; but all the while, deep down inside him, something whispered that his troubles would end some day, and he plucked up his courage and set out more briskly than ever, saying to himself, "Who seeks, finds."

One day, his legs aching beneath him, he sat down in the shade of a narrow valley to rest a little, and sleep overtook him. Suddenly he started out of his dreams at the cackle of voices, and what do you think he saw? Three devils, quarreling so bitterly that they foamed at the mouth! He marched straight up to them, his chest standing out bravely, and said:—

"Hey, there! A quarrel without a fight is like a wedding without fiddlers!"¹

"You have no more sense than a nut on a wall,"²

¹ Roumanian proverb; literally, "wedding without gypsy musicians," or *lantari*.

² Roumanian proverb meaning, "You have no common sense."

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they replied. "We are not quarreling, we are arguing."

"Indeed! And why are you arguing?" asked Fet-Frumos. "Your racket is enough to wake the dead."

"We are in a vexatious plight," they explained. "Our parents left us, on their death, a pair of sandals,¹ a cap,² and a whip, and we can't agree about dividing them."

"And it is on account of such fripperies that you are quarreling?" asked Fet-Frumos in astonishment.

"Fripperies, indeed!" cried the devils indignantly. "Just you listen: whoever wears these sandals can walk on water; whoever puts on this cap becomes invisible to the Devil himself, even should he stick his finger in the old boy's eye; and whoever cracks this whip in the face of his enemy turns him into stone."

"You have told me a marvel, good fellows. I see you have reason to wrangle over the division of these precious objects, because any one of them without the others is not worth a rotten

¹ *Opine-tchi*, sandals laced with cords.

² *Catchioula*, lambskin cap.

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onion. Now, this is what I have to propose, that is, if you care to listen to me," said the prince.

"Speak!" cried the devils in chorus; "we will listen."

"Good!" replied Fet-Frumos. "There are three mountain-peaks in front of us; let each one of you choose a peak and go perch himself on top of it, and when I give the signal, 'One, two, three' — fly! and the one who gets here first shall have the whole inheritance."

"So be it," agreed the devils; "you are our man; you are a true judge!"

And all three took to their heels at once and scattered toward the different peaks. While they were scampering on their way, each one full of confidence, the cunning prince placed his feet in the sandals, pulled the cap down over his head, and grasped the whip in his hand. And when the silly devils were perched on the three peaks, waiting the signal to race back, he cracked the whip — one, two, three! before their faces, and immediately they turned into stone. Then, absorbed in his own affairs, he continued his travels whither his heart led him.

He had taken only ten steps when he saw in

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the air a flock of seven doves. He followed them with his eyes, and seeing them light in a certain spot, he set off in that direction, for he knew that that was where he must go. And so, led by the doves, Fet-Frumos crossed over salt water, running water, and stagnant water, always with dry feet on account of his magic sandals. He traveled over prairies and deserts until he arrived at a high mountain whose top was hidden in the clouds. It was there that the doves lit, and there he must hunt for them. He climbed from rock to rock, from precipice to precipice, sometimes hanging on by means of the stones, sometimes by the roots of bushes. Finally he reached a cave. He stole inside its mouth, and behold! he stood stock-still at the sight of a princely palace, so beautifully ornamented that there was not another like it in all the world.

There dwelt his sweetheart, the queen of the fairies. He knew her at once, when he saw her walking in the garden with her fairy waiting-maids. A little love of a baby frolicked and played by her side, calling on her every moment to look at the butterflies. And Fet-Frumos knew that this little boy was their son.

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Fet-Frumos was overcome with joy. He was quite giddy with longing to seize the little boy and kiss him. Of course, no one could see the prince, for he had the magic cap on his head. Night fell, and still he could not decide how to make his presence known to the fairy. Finally, when she entered the palace for supper, he followed her by stealth, and sat down at the table between her and the little boy.

When the food was passed, he ate like a hungry wolf. He had almost forgotten the taste of cooked vegetables. The fairy was astonished to see the dishes emptied so quickly. She ordered others to be brought, but these also were cleaned up in the twinkling of an eye.

In the meantime, Fet-Frumos, having lifted the magic cap a little on the side toward his boy, the child saw him and cried:—

“Mamma, here is papa!”

“Oh, no, darling!” replied the fairy; “your papa will never find us without working miracles.”

Quickly Fet-Frumos pulled the cap down over his ears and began again to devour the food like a hungry animal, and when he had swallowed the

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last morsel, the fairy ordered the waiting-maids to bring more.

Again Fet-Frumos, delighted at the ease with which his son had recognized him, showed his face a little bit, and the child told his mother, but she thought it was only fancy, because she could not believe that her husband had accomplished the unheard-of feats which alone could gain him admission to her presence. Did she not know that not even a magic bird could light on the walks of her garden?

So the little boy said no more because his father had suddenly drawn the cap down over his ears.

Once more the prince gobbled up all the food — roast meat and stewed fish, game and pies. Thus, always eating, my children, and never filled, he put away so much that there was not even a bone left for the waiting-maids' supper. And the fairy queen, quite unable to understand where the food went, began to get angry.

Then the little boy cried again:—

“Mamma, I tell you that papa is here!”

“But *where*, darling?” asked the fairy; “something is the matter with your eyes, you must be dreaming!”

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“But, no, mamma, I am telling the truth. Look here. He is close by me, he is taking me in his arms.”

Whereupon the fairy was frightened, and Fet-Frumos, seeing this, stopped his tricks, so as not to worry her too much, and, snatching off the cap once for all, he said:—

“Yes, it is I. The boy is not dreaming. Dear fairy, forgive my rash act; those ugly owl-skins were poisoning my life, and I did not mean any harm when I threw them into the fire.”

“We, too, had to suffer,” replied the fairy, “but let us forget the past. Tell me rather how you ever found your way to my palace.”

And after he had told all his adventures and all that he had suffered, she gave him a thousand caresses, and he played with his little boy and they were all happy together.

But the prince insisted that they should return to his country, and the fairy consented, so they set out for the kingdom of the great and powerful emperor, his father, and there they celebrated their reunion in such a wonderful fashion that the news of it spread all over the world.

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Now, the emperor was getting old and wanted to be relieved of the burden of his throne, so the knights and all the people chose for his successor the youngest of the family, Fet-Frumos, because he was a Roumanian of the purest blood, honest and open-hearted.¹

And they lived a long time and were so contented that their happiness became a proverb throughout the centuries.

Thus, I,—

Whilst wandering far o'er hill and dale,
Have lined my cap with many a tale!

¹ Literally, a green Roumanian; that is, a Roumanian of unmixed blood.



THE MAN OF STONE



NCE upon a time there was an emperor and an empress, both of whom were very handsome and young, but they had no children, which was a great grief to them.

One day an Arab came to the court and begged for an audience, and when he appeared before the ruler, he said: "Glorious emperor, I have heard that the empress is wear-

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ing her heart out for the lack of children, and so I have brought some magical herbs from which to make a brew, and after drinking of it, her majesty will become a mother."

The emperor accepted the gift of herbs, and ordered the Arab to be presented with a horse from the royal stables and beautiful garments that dazzled the eye with their richness. Then he summoned the empress, gave her the herbs, and told her to have prepared an infusion of which to drink. The empress called one of her waiting-women, and ordered her to make the brew, but failed to explain to her the magic quality of the cup. And so the woman, in her ignorance, tasted the infusion herself before giving it to her mistress.

Shortly after, the empress did, indeed, become aware that she was to have a child, and in due time both she and her waiting-woman brought into the world two beautiful sons, and one was named Dafin and the other Afin.

Years passed, and the emperor set out for the wars and left his son to rule in his place. He gave a bunch of keys into his keeping and said:—

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“My son, you can enter all the rooms which these keys unlock, except that one which must be opened with the key of gold. Beware of using this key, for it will bring you misfortune.”

And so he departed, and his son amused himself by going through all the rooms, which were filled with works of art, exquisite furniture, and wonderful precious stones. But he was not satisfied until he arrived before the door of the golden key. He hesitated awhile, thinking of his father’s warning and command. But alas! curiosity overcame him and he ended by entering. Once inside, he saw nothing but a telescope, and he could not forbear gazing into it, and in doing so, his eyes were almost blinded by the sight of a glorious golden palace, more dazzling than the sun itself. The magic telescope revealed the interior of the palace where lived Madame Kiraline, sweet as a garden flower and more beautiful than a fairy.

After having gazed upon her a long time, he put the telescope back in place and left the room, his eyes filled with tears. Shortly afterward the emperor returned from the wars victorious, but instead of being received with joy by his son, the empress alone came to meet him, with the sad

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news that the prince was sick. The emperor understood at once the nature of his malady, and called together all the doctors and magicians of the world, and they declared with one voice that the only remedy for the prince's illness was to give him Madame Kiraline for a wife.

So the emperor sent ambassadors to beg her hand for his son, but all in vain, for her father did not wish her to marry. When the prince heard this he determined to go himself to ask her in marriage of her father. He confided his plans to his foster-brother Afin, who during all these years had been his faithful attendant, and together they set out on their journey. They traveled all day, and at nightfall they arrived at the home of the North Wind's mother. Summoned by their knock, a wrinkled old woman appeared at the door and asked for whom they sought. They replied that all they sought was a lodging for the night and directions as to the road that led to Madame Kiraline.

The old woman looked at them with pity and said: "I would receive you gladly, but I fear that my son may return and change you into men of ice. I advise you to go to my youngest sister; she

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can take you in, and she will tell you how to find the road that leads to Madame Kiraline."

So the prince and his companion set out for the home of the mother of the South Wind. They knocked on the door, and a slender little woman, young and pretty, came to open it. As soon as she saw the two handsome lads, she said: "Prince Dafin, I know that you are seeking Madame Kiraline to wed her. But you cannot succeed without the aid of my son. Stay here, and I will hide you because he will kill you if he discovers your presence."

And after she had clapped her hands three times a golden bird with a diamond beak and emerald wings came out from under the oven, hid them under its wings, and returned to its hiding-place.

Before long they heard the sweet rustling of a breeze which was filled with the odor of roses and lavender. The door opened of itself, and a handsome young man, with long golden hair, and beautiful silver wings, holding a wand of flowers interlaced with sweet herbs, entered the room.

The moment he was inside he cried:—

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“Mother, I feel the presence of a being from the other world.”

“It is only an idea, dear son,” she replied soothingly; “what would a being from the other world be doing here?”

So the South Wind grew calm, and after having drunk some hind’s milk with carnation water out of an alabaster cup, he began to tell of his day’s wanderings.

When his mother perceived him in a good humor she said:—

“My son, tell me how to find the kingdom of Madame Kiraline and what a man must do to wed her.”

“That is a hard question, mother, but I will try to answer. The kingdom of Madame Kiraline is ten years’ distance, but one can make the journey quickly if he but cross the black forest, until he reaches the boiling river that throws up rocks and flames as high as the sky, and there he must mount astride the staff of the fairies, if he would cross over. But whoever repeats these directions to any man shall be changed into stone up to the knees.

“And once arrived in the kingdom of Madame

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Kiraline, he must capture a golden stag and hide himself inside, and thus be carried into the chamber of the princess and so steal her away. And who tells this to any man shall be changed into stone up to the waist.

“And married and happy at last, they shall be persecuted by the mother of the North Wind, who will send a messenger to the princess with garments as fine as spiders’ webs, and she shall buy, but unless she sprinkle herself with the tears of a turtle-dove, she shall perish in wearing them. And whoever repeats these words shall be wholly and entirely changed into stone.”

The son of the emperor had fallen asleep whilst the South Wind was talking, but his foster-brother had remained wide awake and had heard everything. Next day, as soon as the South Wind left the house, the son of the emperor came out from his hiding-place and asked the South Wind’s mother if her son had told her anything, but she, fearing to be turned into stone, answered that she had learned nothing.

Not a word did Afin say of what he had heard; he merely encouraged the prince to set out on their way, and they walked from morning until

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night, during a long summer day, and at nightfall they heard a great noise and a monstrous roaring, and, behold! in front of them leaped the river of boiling pitch, bubbling and hissing and throwing up stones as high as the sky. The son of the emperor was frightened, but Afin said to him:—

“Do not be afraid, but follow me into this forest and obey all I say.”

When they arrived in the midst of the forest, they saw the fairies' staff, and both of them got astride and spurred it three times. Instantly the staff was changed into a chariot with twelve fiery horses, and they mounted high up above the whirling winds and descended in front of Madame Kiraline's palace.

As soon as they touched the ground, the chariot was changed into a stump, and as they looked up at the splendid palace, they beheld Madame Kiraline at one of the windows. She was lovely as the day and was clad in a silken robe embroidered with pearls. Scarcely had she laid eyes on the son of the emperor than she fell deeply in love with him, so deeply, in fact, that it made her quite ill with an illness that threatened her life.

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All the efforts of her poor father to save her appeared to be in vain, until one day an old woman came to the palace and said to the emperor:—

“Glorious ruler, I wish you a long life! If you would save your daughter from the mysterious malady that is wearing her away, hunt for the golden stag that sings like a bird, and keep it at your house for three days and you will see that your daughter will be cured.”

So a herald proclaimed the order of the emperor that a golden stag be found, and after three days had passed Afin tapped the stump three times, and it changed into a golden stag, and the faithful lad placed the prince inside the stag and led it before the door of the palace.

When the emperor saw the stag, he came out and asked the young man if the beautiful animal was for sale.

“It is not for sale,” replied Afin, “but for hire.”

“Very well, my lad; and for how much?” asked the ruler.

“For a thousand gold pieces,” boldly replied the young man.

The bargain was concluded, and the emperor took the stag and placed it in the room of Ma-

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dame Kiraline. As soon as the beautiful creature found itself alone with the lady, it began to sing a song so melancholy that even the stones of the walls trembled. Madame Kiraline slept, and Prince Dafin stole out from the stag's belly, kissed the lady on the brow, and quickly hid himself again.

The next day Madame Kiraline told her attendants that in her dreams she had been embraced by a handsome young man. And one of her maids, more cunning than the rest, advised her to feign slumber when next the stag should sing, so if any one kissed her, she could capture him. When darkness fell, the stag again sang its melancholy song. Madame Kiraline pretended to sleep, and when Prince Dafin kissed her the second time, she threw her arms about his neck and cried:—

“You cannot escape me, dear sweetheart, for I have longed for you these many days.”

The handsome prince had no desire to escape from his dear Madame Kiraline, and fled back into the stag only at break of day. When his foster-brother and the emperor came to fetch the stag away, Madame Kiraline wept bitterly and

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did not wish to give it up, but Afin whispered to her: —

“Do not weep, noble lady; only beg permission of your father that the stag may be led outside of the town and there we will await a chariot with twelve fiery horses which will conduct us to the kingdom of Prince Dafin, your beloved.”

So the lady demanded and obtained this permission, and with great pomp the stag was led outside the town. There Afin touched the stag three times, and it was changed into a chariot with twelve fiery horses, and taking the hand of Madame Kiraline and that of Prince Dafin, he jumped in and all three disappeared. After a voyage which lasted all through a long summer day, as long as the words of a tale that is never finished, they emerged from the other world and arrived in their own country.

When the emperor heard the news of the arrival of his son, he came to meet him with a great number of courtiers, priests, and soldiers, and escorted him and his beautiful sweetheart to the court, where they celebrated their marriage with a wedding feast that lasted three days and three nights.

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And so time passed, until one day when Madame Kiraline was seated at the window a man came by with fine garments for sale. Madame Kiraline had him brought inside, and she purchased two chemises which were finer than a spider's web, and one of them she tried on. Soon afterwards she fell ill, so ill that she was likely to die. The news of her illness spread through the palace; Afin heard of it, and at midnight he entered the lady's apartment and sprinkled her all over with the tears of a turtle-dove.

Now the sentinels posted at the door saw him, and immediately carried the news to Prince Dafin that the son of the waiting-woman had dared to cross the threshold of the princess's room. The prince was furious at the treachery of his foster-brother and ordered that he be beheaded.

But Afin appeared before the prince and said:—

“Glorious prince, as a recompense for my past fidelity and devotion, grant me one request before I die. Bring together all the dignitaries of the realm and permit me to speak before them and afterwards let me be beheaded if you will.”

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The prince accorded this request and ordered the imperial council to be summoned and also Madame Kiraline. Then fixing his eye upon Afin he commanded:—

“Speak, miserable one, tell all you have to say.”

And thus spake Afin:—

“Once upon a time there was an emperor’s son who fell in love with a princess of the other world, and because he could not live without her, he departed in search of her with his foster-brother. He vowed he would find her or perish in the attempt. After they had traveled all over the world, they arrived at the house of the North Wind’s mother and begged her to point out the way to the princess’s dwelling. The North Wind’s mother sent them to her sister, and at the home of the South Wind’s mother they were favorably received, and this kind and powerful lady promised to question her son, and this is what he said: ‘The empire of Madame Kiraline is a distance of ten years from here, but this distance may be traversed in an instant if one is brave enough to enter the black forest, near the river of pitch which throws rocks and fire up into the sky.

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There one may find the staff of the fairies and, mounted astride it, one may cross the river. On arriving in the empire of Madam Kiraline, one may change his chariot into a golden stag and, entering therein, one may penetrate the chamber of the princess and steal her away. But should he marry her, the mother of the North Wind, who is jealous of their happiness, will send to the princess a vendor of fine garments, finer than the webs of spiders, and unless Madame Kiraline sprinkles herself with the tears of a turtle-dove, she will die three days after wearing one of these garments.'

"After the South Wind had told all this to his mother, he swore that she would be turned into stone if she repeated anything of what she had heard.

"Thus, when the prince asked the South Wind's mother what she had learned of her son, she, fearing to be turned into stone, declared he had told her nothing. But the prince's foster-brother, who had remained awake all night, had heard all, and without divulging the secret, he led the prince into the black forest, mounted the fairies' staff and passed over the river of pitch."

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As soon as Afin had spoken these words, he became as stone up to his knees. But in spite of this, he continued his narrative:—

“When they arrived at Madame Kiraline’s palace, the foster-brother touched the chariot three times and it became a stump; he touched the stump three times and it became a golden stag, and inside it he placed the son of the emperor.”

After these words Afin became as stone up to his waist.

The prince and princess, convinced of his innocence, commenced to weep, and to beg him to leave off his story. But he did not wish to, and continued:—

“Shortly after their marriage the princess bought two chemises, one of which she put on, and she fell ill, so ill that she was likely to die. The foster-brother, knowing whence came this malady, entered her chamber at midnight and sprinkled her from head to foot with the tears of a turtle-dove, and thus saved her from death.”

Hardly had Afin uttered these words when he was completely turned into stone. Before this

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terrible calamity Prince Dafin and Princess Kirlane were overcome with grief, and they wept three days and three nights. Then they took the petrified body of their faithful foster-brother and had it placed in their chamber so they might never forget him.

After a time a child was born to them, and one day Prince Dafin told his wife that it had been revealed to him in a dream that their foster-brother might be brought back to life if they were willing to sacrifice their child and stain the stone with its blood. The princess replied that she, also, had had a like dream. Then with one accord they sacrificed their child and stained the stone image of their dear foster-brother with its blood, and behold! the image uttered a sigh and slowly became flesh again.

“Oh, what a long time I have been asleep!” cried Afin.

“Yes, dear brother, and you would have slept a hundred years had I not sacrificed my child and stained your body with its blood,” groaned the poor prince.

Then Afin made with his hunting-knife a slit in his finger, from which he let his blood trickle

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on the body of the child, who immediately came to life. And the prince, almost crazy with joy, ordered that this happy day be celebrated throughout the kingdom.



THE PRINCESSES WHO DANCED



ONCE upon a time there was a young man who was very poor; his parents in dying had left him nothing at all, so he made his living by working here and there as a farmhand. He was such a kind lad, so polite and so neat, that all the village boys envied him, and his fellow-servants held a grudge against him on account of his gentle manners. But this did not worry him at all, and

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he kept on busily at his tasks, and when his companions got together in the evening to gossip and backbite, he pretended not to understand their spiteful remarks, and was so successful in his feigning that they thought him simple-minded, and nicknamed him "Open-Mouth."

On the other hand, his masters were very fond of him and praised his work, and he never lacked employment. As for the pretty maids of the village, they dreamed about him, and when he passed, they nudged one another and whispered, stealing sly glances at him out of the corners of their eyes.

In truth, they had good reason to stare at him, so well-made was he, with his slender waist and small head, and hair as black as a raven's wing and as glossy as silk. His beautiful dark curls lay on his shoulders like a mantle, and floated behind him in the breeze, making his skin look all the whiter by contrast. I must not forget his moustache; it was so fine, so delicate, that it lay on his lip like a faint shadow. And his eyes! — so deep and shining were they that when a village maiden looked into them she was bound to have a heartache.

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When he drove his cows to the watering-place, the girls all tried to speak to him, to provoke him, or to interest him, but all to no purpose. He pretended not to notice their coquetry, and they, fired afresh by his indifference, changed his nickname of "Open-Mouth" to that of "Prince Charming," for they thought him as handsome as a prince in a fairy tale.

Behold him, dear children, each day driving his cows to pasture, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and taking great pride in his herd, which thrived better than any other. How he managed it, I do not know. But there they were, sleek and glossy, growing fatter before one's eyes, and giving the best of milk. Perhaps because their herder knew the corners where grew the sweetest and tenderest herbs, and led them there.

At any rate, Prince Charming seemed to be beloved of the fairies, for wherever he went, there he carried joy; even the flowers and grasses freshened up at his coming. Evidently he was born under a lucky star and destined for great things, but nothing could alter his modest demeanor or render him vain and scornful. He went about his business with energy and cheer, never meddling

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in the affairs of others, and happy in his ignorance of what destiny held in store for him.

And so, one spring day, when Prince Charming was a little more tired than usual from running after his cows, he lay down under an old, gnarled tree and fell asleep. He had chosen well his resting-place; it might have been made on purpose for napping. Imagine, dear children, a lovely valley, all dotted with flowers and sweet herbs; on one hand, at the foot of a gently sloping hill, a stream flowed out from the hollow trunk of a tree, in crystal rivulets. It wound about, amongst the flowers and grasses, its ripples gleaming in the sunshine, ever murmuring a sweet song. As for the tree under which Prince Charming was resting, it was so tall that its limbs robbed the clouds of their place in the sky. Amongst its branches flitted a thousand birds, chirping and whistling a thousand different songs as they prepared their nests or fed their young.

No sooner had the poor lad rested his head on the turf than he fell asleep, but at the end of a short time he sprang up nimbly, and cried, "Oh, what a sweet dream I have had! So sweet that it

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awakened me!" He had dreamed that a fairy had visited him, the most beautiful fairy of earth or sky. And what had she ordered him to do? A most surprising thing: he, a humble cowherd, was to go before the ruler of the country in search of his fortune!

Prince Charming could scarce believe his senses, and when he was quite wide awake, he began to wonder what might be the meaning of his dream. He could not rid himself of the thought of it all day long, and the more he turned it over in his mind, the more puzzled he became. For he did not yet perceive that his lucky star had sent him a sign.

The next day, as he drove his cattle to pasture, by the shortest way, as usual, something, I know not what, drew him aside from the path, and he found himself again under the great tree. Once more he lay down under its shade, where he fell asleep and had the same dream. Awaking suddenly, he was more and more puzzled, and all day long he brooded over the affair.

The third day again he returned to the tree, and once more in his dreams the fairy spoke to him. But this time, annoyed by his resistance,

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she threatened him with all kinds of punishments if he failed to obey her. Not daring to hesitate longer, he arose, and without any delay he drove his cows to the stable and presented himself before his master.

“Master,” said he, “I want to go in search of my fortune; I have served a long time without any assurance of a better lot. So be just, I pray you, and give me my wages.”

“No, no, my lad,” replied his master, “do not quit my service. Are not your wages sufficient? Have you not enough to eat and drink? It will be better for you to remain here. I will find you a good wife with a dowry, or I will help you to establish yourself on a little farm. Believe me, wandering about over the world will only end by your becoming an object of pity before all men.”

“By the grace of God, good master, I have always had enough to quench my hunger and slake my thirst. But I have taken a notion to wander, and not all the gold on earth can hold me here another day.”

“So be it,” said the master. And seeing that he could not hinder the lad, he gave him his

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wages. And Prince Charming pocketed his money and set out on his journey.

Leaving the town behind him, he traveled straight to the imperial court, where he was lucky enough to be employed by the emperor's head gardener, who was very glad to hire such a fine-looking lad. For the poor man had suffered many jeers at the hands of the princesses on account of the ugly and awkward lads who helped tend the imperial flower-beds. The new assistant was as clean and handsome as possible, but he still wore the coarse garments of a cowherd. So the head gardener fitted him out from top to toe with fine linen, and with an embroidered smock, such as assistants in the emperor's garden should wear. As the lad was well-made, his beautiful clothing became him marvelously well.

Aside from the care of some of the garden borders, his chief affair was to prepare each morning twelve charming little bouquets, which he presented to the princesses when they came out from the palace to take the air.

Now, there was a mystery in the lives of these twelve princesses, and it was said that they

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would never marry until some one appeared who could break the charm under which they were held and compel one of them to fall in love with him. As victims of this spell, the sisters were consumed by a perfect passion for the dance. All night they danced in delirious frenzy, and each morning their twelve pairs of white satin mules were in tatters. But no one knew anything about these wild revels — their poor father, the emperor, was aware only that his daughters were costing him a fortune in satin slippers. Already was he angry at their indifference, for none of the suitors who came from afar could please them.

So the emperor caused to be published far and wide a decree saying that any man who could discover how the princesses got rid of twelve pairs of slippers every night might choose one of them in marriage. All he could do, poor man, was to shut them up at sunset in a room of the palace, behind nine iron doors, each one locked fast. Nevertheless, the next day their mules were in tatters, and in spite of spying and watching, no one had an inkling of the mischief they had been up to, for they had never been seen to slip out of the room which was so well barred and

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bolted. It was whispered that fate had destined them to pass their lives in this strange fashion, so what could any one do?

As soon as the decree was published, suitors began to pour in like water under a bridge: sons of emperors, sons of great nobles, and sons of petty nobles. And in the order of their coming, each one watched from sunset until dawn outside the chamber of the princesses, with its nine doors fast locked.

The emperor never closed an eye all night, so hopeful was he of good news in the morning. But it was not to be. All that he learned was that the suitor left on guard the night before was not to be found the next day. He had disappeared from off the face of the earth, without leaving any trace! It was in this fashion that eleven fine lads had already vanished.

Therefore, those that remained were overcome with fear and refused to keep the watch, preferring to renounce the princesses rather than to suffer such a strange fate. The emperor himself trembled with fright at the thought of these eleven young men who had vanished in spying on the princesses, and never, no, never again

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would he dare impose such conditions on a suitor. So he continued to buy every day twelve pairs of white satin mules, and he feared more and more that his daughters would grow old without marrying and his race become extinct. Already he pictured them, their locks turning gray, without ever being hidden under the bridal veil with its golden embroidery.¹

In the meanwhile, Prince Charming kept busy at his tasks, and the princesses were well pleased with his dainty little bouquets, and the head gardener with his honesty and his cleverness. When he handed the flowers to the twelve sisters, he never lifted his eyes, but when the turn of the youngest came, I know not why, he always blushed like a poppy, and his heart beat almost to bursting.

The young girl noticed his confusion, but she said to herself: "This lad is very modest. 'T is his timidity which makes him blush." But it was always the same, yesterday and to-day, and it would be the same to-morrow. Nevertheless, he

¹ In Roumania, unmarried girls wear their hair hanging in braids, while married women hide theirs under a veil (*marama*), which is placed on their heads by the village matrons on the bridal morning.

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did not lift his head, knowing well that such roses were not for humble gardeners. But how can a lad go counter to his heart when he is young and ardent? He, too, longed to keep the watch during the night, in spite of all he knew of the misfortune of those unhappy lads who had watched before.

One day the youngest princess was indiscreet enough to confide to her sisters that the little gardener blushed each time he presented her with flowers, and the bold girl added that she found the lad as charming as a little lord. This was enough to draw down a scolding from her eldest sister, who ridiculed her, and asked how she could even mention a common gardener. Was it not a sign that she was becoming quite plebeian?

As for the poor lad, his heart counseled him to go boldly before the emperor and ask to be permitted to serve his turn in watching, but he felt so keenly his humble origin and the boldness of his pretensions that he hesitated a long time. It was not that he was kept back by the mysterious disappearance of the other suitors; rather he feared to lose his place. He who sucks dry the

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best of fruit gains only bruised lips, said he, and driven from the palace, where would he ever see again the beautiful sisters? And so he held himself well in check each day when he offered them the bouquets, for the youth, beauty, and charm of the princesses, and above all, the tender regard of the youngest touched him so deeply, that he knew he should die of grief if he lost the chance of presenting them with their flowers, and feeling each day the touch of their dainty fingers as soft as eiderdown on his rough hand. And so by day and by night the thought of the youngest sister never left him, and the more he dreamed of her the sadder he became, until he began to grow quite lean and sallow. Thus, one night while he slept, worn out with his love and his grief, the fairy of the flowery valley appeared again, the fairy of the tree of golden dreams, and thus she spoke:—

“Go to the corner of the garden toward the east; there you will find two laurel bushes, one with flowers of crimson, the other with flowers of rose. Beside them there will be a golden spade, a golden watering-pot, and a silken napkin. Take up the laurels by the roots and plant them in

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beautiful vases, then tend them like the apple of your eye. With the golden spade you will spade them, with the golden watering-pot you will water them, with the silken napkin you will dust them, and when they grow to be as high as a man, all your wishes shall be granted."

Then, like a beam of light, the fairy disappeared before the young man had time even to thank her. Quite confused and heavy with sleep, Prince Charming jumped up and ran toward the corner of the garden, stumbling and rubbing his eyes as he went. He stood open-mouthed with surprise when he found everything as the fairy had predicted. He wiped his eyes and pinched himself, believing that he still dreamed. But no, it was not a dream. The laurel bushes were real laurels, one with blooms of rose, the other with blooms of crimson. So at once he set to work to carry out all the fairy's orders.

And from this day forth he tended them with a jealous eye, spading them with the golden spade, watering them with the watering-pot of gold, and dusting them gently with the silken napkin. And the bushes grew as if they were bewitched, and in a short time they were wondrously tall and

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strong, the finest laurel bushes in the land, and at last they attained the height of a man. Prince Charming, therefore, took courage, and addressed himself first to the crimson laurel, according to the instructions of the fairy:—

“Laurel, laurel, tenderly have I spaded thee,
Laurel, laurel, daily have I watered thee,
Laurel, laurel, gently have I dusted thee;
And now a gift I ask of thee:
Make me so that none can see,
And may I pass invisibly.”

No sooner had he spoken these words than at the end of one of the branches a bud appeared, and it grew before his eyes until it burst into a marvelous bloom, a flower so lovely that to see it was to crave it. He stretched out his hand to pluck it, deftly severed the stem, and thrust it in his bosom next his heart — always according to the instructions of the fairy.

The same evening, when the princesses entered the chamber which was guarded by nine doors and nine locks, Prince Charming slipped in behind them without being seen, for he now had the power of becoming invisible. And this is what he found:—

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The twelve sisters, instead of preparing to go quietly to bed, dressed their beautiful hair in elaborate fashion and clothed themselves in splendid garments, as if preparing for a ball. The lad was astonished, but he made ready to follow them, curious to know how they would get out, where they would go, and what would take place.

“Are you ready?” demanded the eldest sister.

“Yes,” answered the rest.

Then she tapped on the floor with her foot and a trapdoor opened. They descended by this means and went a long way until they came to a great garden enclosed by a wall of brass. The princess tapped again with her foot and the bronze doors parted in two. They entered the mysterious garden, the brave lad always at their heels. So close, indeed, that he awkwardly trod upon the train of the youngest sister, and as he did not withdraw his foot quickly enough, she was aware of it. The poor little one turned instantly, but seeing nothing, she became frightened and cried to her companions:—

“Sisters, sisters, some one is following us! I am afraid! Some one trod upon my dress!”

And all of them began to search on the right

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and the left, but not a soul could they see. So the eldest one comforted the youngest and said:—

“Don’t be afraid, little one. Who could follow us this far? How could a mortal spy on us? For not even a magic bird could light in this garden. A briar must have caught your dress, little giddypate that you are!”

Upon this, they continued, and the party crossed a forest of trees with silver leaves, then a forest with golden leaves, then still another whose leaves were of diamonds and carbuncles which almost blinded one with their glittering. Finally they arrived at a great lake upon whose bosom was a little island, and in the middle of the island a most beautiful palace, the like of which Prince Charming had never before seen.

Twelve little boats with as many rowers, who seemed to have been dipped in a bath of gold, were awaiting the princesses. They embarked at once, each one in her little boat, according to her rank and age, and sailed away in single file, as fly the herons when they migrate. But the boat of the youngest lagged behind the others, and the rower was astonished at its heaviness, for he

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could not see Prince Charming seated at the prow. As they landed, from out of the palace floated the sound of exquisite music, and on hearing it, one began to dance whether he willed it or no. As quick as a ray of light, the princesses sprang into the ballroom, and no sooner were they over the sill than they began to dance, each one more nimbly than the rest.

And with whom did they dance? With all the young men, sons of emperors and nobles, who had disappeared in keeping the watch. These were the partners with whom they whirled, balanced and stamped in endless figures, such as were never danced before. And after a while, with so much dancing, their little white satin mules were torn in tatters.

The young gardener, always invisible, kept his eyes glued on them, more and more amazed at the wonders he saw. The ballroom of the palace was so long and so high that one could scarcely see the walls and the ceiling. It was lined with gold and studded with precious stones which sparkled with gleams of red, blue, green, and yellow, in the light of numberless torches whose tongues of flame shot up high in the air from

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great golden candelabra. It was, indeed, dazzling to look upon the festoons of pearls, garlands of emeralds, arabesques of diamonds, and wreaths of rubies which decorated the vast chamber. Prince Charming would have liked to sit quietly in a corner and gaze upon these unaccustomed wonders, but impossible! He also was drawn under the magic of the music and could not rest in one place, but must needs bound and twirl and leap from one end of the ballroom to the other. Resistance was useless; he could not escape the spell of the dance. Who could imagine such music! Its harmonies were undreamed of, and proceeded from the combination of many instruments, some of them unknown to mortals; and with these sounds mingled the melody of choruses even more delicious; thus the intoxicating strains incited to wondrous dancing, and to leaps and bounds of most wild and amazing quality.

The revel kept up until the break of day, when suddenly the music ceased and tables appeared laden with all sorts of delicacies. The couples took their places and ate and drank with merry hearts, waited upon by Arabs in fantastic livery.

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Prince Charming had seated himself in a corner, and from there watched the feast, his mouth watering at sight of so many good things. The meal concluded, the princesses made ready to depart. The poor lad, always invisible, attached himself to them like a devil to a monk, and in crossing the forest with silver leaves, he took a fancy to break off a twig. Immediately a quivering ran through all the branches, and the trees swayed back and forth as if filled with a vengeful anger.

The sisters were startled at this sudden rustling. What was stirring amongst the trees? But the eldest reassured the others:—

“Do not be afraid. It must be that the little bird who nests in the belfry of the old church near the palace has followed us. Only she could penetrate this forest. She must be flitting about amongst the branches and making a noise with her wings.”

Thus quieted, the princesses pursued their way, and finally the trapdoor opened and they regained the chamber where their father kept them under lock and key.

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The next day, when the little gardener offered the bouquets to the princesses, he slipped the branch plucked in the enchanted forest into the bouquet of the youngest sister. She was terribly astonished to find it and looked upon the lad with amazement, not being able to imagine how this silver spray had found its way into her bunch of flowers.

The second evening everything happened just as it had the night before. Always invisible, the young lover followed the sisters, only this time he plucked a twig from the forest of gold, and hid it in the princess's bouquet. This was a fresh cause for astonishment to the young girl, and when she saw the sparkle of gold amongst the green leaves, her heart felt as if it were on fire. Excited by such a mystery, she was eager to solve it, so in the afternoon she pretended that she suffered for fresh air, and so invented an excuse to descend into the garden, where she sought out the little gardener.

She stopped him and asked innocently, —

“Where do you find the pretty branches of gold and silver leaves that you bind in my bouquet every morning?”

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“Your highness knows as well as I,” the bold lad answered.

“Then you have followed us! You know where we go at night?” she demanded.

“I kiss your hands, princess; perhaps that is true — ” he began.

“And how did you follow us without being seen by any of my sisters?” queried the princess, thus seeming to range herself upon the side of the little gardener.

But before he could answer, she turned away, whispering mischievously over her shoulder, “Until this evening!”

In leaving, she offered him a purse with this warning, “Not a word to any one about our nightly adventures.”

But the lad replied bravely, “My silence is not for sale, princess.”

“Very well, so be it, but if you betray us, I will have your head cut off.”

But Prince Charming knew these harsh words were from the lips and not the heart, for the princess’s looks betrayed her fondness for him.

The third night he accompanied them again, always invisible. This time it was a spray from

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the forest of carbuncles and diamonds that he brought away. Again the forest groaned sullenly, the princesses were afraid, and the eldest must needs comfort them. But a secret joy filled the heart of the youngest, at the sound of the rustling.

The next day, when she found the twig of diamonds and carbuncles amongst her flowers, she cast upon the little gardener a long, long look, and she found him so graceful, and so courteous, that she could not see that he differed one whit from the sons of emperors and of nobles! This emboldened the young man and he looked her full in the face with eyes of love, and under his regard the princess was greatly troubled, but he pretended not to notice it and returned to his work.

The young girl was left full of curiosity and bewilderment. How had this gardener's lad been able to follow them to the enchanted palace? The more she pondered, the more convinced was she that Prince Charming was not an ordinary mortal, since he had been able to discover things of which even sorcerers themselves were ignorant. And besides, his proud air, his intelligent expres-

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sion, and his handsome features proved that he was not a simple rake-push. Did not all his person possess a charm which seemed to say, "Come to me"?

When the sisters retired to their chamber, the youngest told them all that had happened, and when they learned that the little gardener knew everything about their nightly revels, they decided to punish him as they had punished the other suitors. But Prince Charming was present (always invisible) and overheard their plots. It was as if the Devil ¹ himself had whispered in his ear that these princesses were not to be trusted. Knowing, then, what he was about to stick his nose into, he ran to the garden, sought out the enchanted laurels, and demanded their counsel.

"Laurel, laurel, tenderly have I spaded thee,
Laurel, laurel, daily have I watered thee,
Laurel, laurel, gently have I dusted thee,
I pray thee now to grant to me
Both strength and wit to set me free
From women's plots and witchery."

As before, he saw a bud sprout, and from it burst a splendid flower. No sooner had he

¹ Literally, "hedge-hog" (*erizus*). This animal is thought by the Roumanian peasants to be an incarnation of the Devil.

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plucked it and hidden it in his bosom than his sunburned skin became as white and delicate as a maiden's, and he felt strange things passing through his brain, and without knowing how or why, he began to think more clearly than ever before, and his wits felt as keen as the blade of a hunting-knife, and at the same time a change took place in his outward appearance and he found himself clad in rich garments like those of a prince or a noble. Thus transformed, he went straightway before the emperor and begged to be allowed to keep the watch in his turn. But the emperor had pity on his youth and counseled him to give up this idea, for those that watched were never seen again. Nevertheless, it was impossible to discourage him, and he insisted with so much zeal that finally the emperor granted him permission, never once suspecting that it was the assistant gardener who had so boldly appeared before him, so fine a figure did the handsome lad present. And when he appeared before the princesses, they, too, were deceived, all except the youngest, who loved him so dearly that she could not fail to recognize him, whereupon she nearly fainted with joy and apprehension.

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Therefore, at nightfall the sisters departed for the dance with the latest suitor. The first condition of his success was not to fall by the wayside, so he took care not to stumble — and avoided rough places as he would have a kettle of hot *mamaliga*.¹ They arrived without accident at the enchanted palace, where they danced until dawn, then they sat down at table, as usual. An Arab attendant presented Prince Charming with a magic cup from which the other suitors had drunk the enchanted draught that stole away their sense and reason. But Prince Charming, who had been warned by the laurel, turned toward his sweetheart, his eyes full of tears and shining with love, and in a tender voice demanded:—

“Would you have me drink and be lost to the world as the other suitors were, and all for love of you? Is it, then, a heart of ice which you hide in your bosom?”

“No,” declared the princess, “my heart is not of ice. It is melting with love for you. Do not drink, I beseech you; I would rather tend a

¹ *Mamaliga*, a kind of farinaceous pudding which constitutes the base of the peasant's nourishment.

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garden with you than be an empress without you!"

At these words Prince Charming, wild with joy, threw the draught over his shoulder and knelt before her:—

"Do not be afraid, dear princess," he whispered, "because you will never, never have to tend a garden."

The moment these words were uttered the spell was broken. The enchanted palace vanished as though it had never been; they all found themselves in the palace of the emperor: the twelve princesses, Prince Charming, and the eleven other suitors. And when the emperor saw them in flesh and blood, he was mute with surprise, his two hands plunged into his long beard. And the little gardener explained everything to him, after which the emperor offered his youngest and prettiest daughter as bride to the brave lad who had now become the most charming and gracious of princes. And to his other daughters he offered the eleven suitors, to each one the gallant of her choice, all sons of emperors and nobles.

And they celebrated the marriage of the twelve

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princesses for a hundred leagues around, and with so much gayety that it would require a thousand tongues besides mine to recount it all.

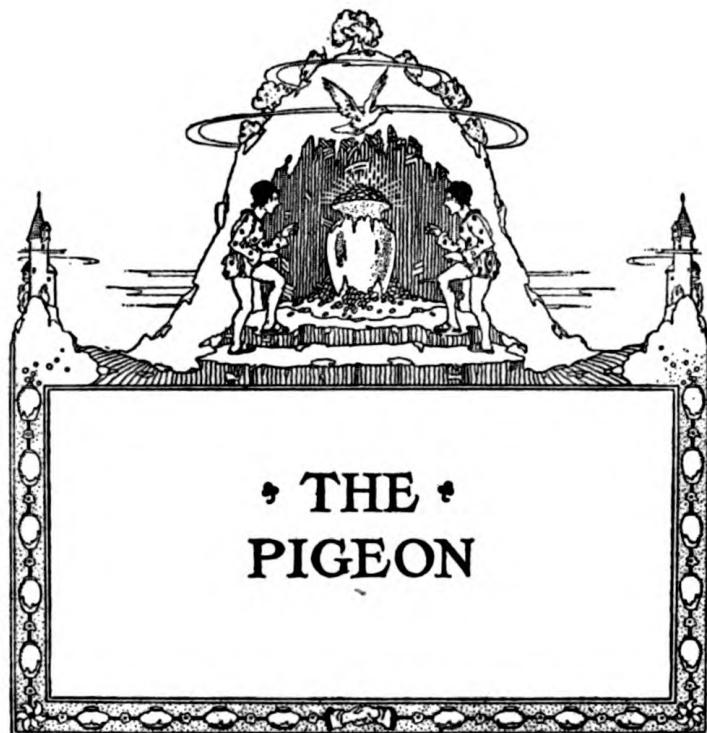
But before the marriage of the youngest, she demanded of her sweetheart that he tell her by what means he had been able to discover the secret of their revels and how he had been able to practice the enchantments which they had witnessed.

He was so much in love that he complied with her request, and in order that she might not have a husband more powerful than herself, but rather one with the weaknesses and frailties of other men, she begged him to cut down the laurel trees and throw them in the fire.

Only after he consented would she marry him, and they lived happily ever after, — that is, as happily as one can in this uncertain world, — until they reached an extreme old age.



THE PIGEON



ONCE upon a time there were two poor day laborers who had been friends from childhood. As their hearts were in their work, they accepted any task that fell under their hands, whether in the town or in the country, provided that it offered enough for two, for they were unwilling to be separated.

One starlit night they set out for a distant village, and after having trudged along until the

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break of day, being somewhat weary, they halted in a lovely green glade all sown with flowers, and chose a comfortable spot in which to rest.

One of them had scarce put his head on the turf when he fell asleep, but the other, for some reason, I know not why, failed to close his eyes. In vain did he turn from one side to the other, as he tried to make himself more at ease. Something kept him awake in spite of himself, and so he lay idly watching his sleeping companion for above a half-hour. Suddenly he sat up and stared with open mouth at the sight of a white pigeon which came from I know not where and flew back and forth above the sleeper's head. So tame did the bird appear that it seemed one had only to stretch out one's hand to capture it. But when Petrichel (for this was the laborer's name) tried to grasp it, the pigeon flew aside gently and lit upon the ground a short distance away.

Petrichel ran after it, but when he was on the point of seizing it, again it took flight. In this fashion, first on the wing, then on the ground, it led the laborer onward into a remote thicket.

There Petrichel saw on the ground the skull of

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a horse, bleached by the sun and washed by the rain, and imagine his astonishment when he beheld the pigeon enter the skull by way of the mouth and fly out by way of the eye! Thrice did the bird make this maneuver; then, beating its wings joyously, it took flight like an arrow, turning its head from time to time toward the man, as if to say, "Follow me, my friend!" Fluttering toward a little rocky hillock, it rested there an instant, then darted straight up into the vault of heaven and disappeared in the blue.

Petrichel followed it with his eyes until he had a crick in his neck; then concluding that the bird was gone for good, he turned his steps toward his companion, when, behold! he saw the pigeon drop down near the spot where the laborer still snored. Hastening to come up with it, Petrichel was amazed to see the bird alight upon the forehead of the sleeper, poise there an instant, and disappear. Weary with the chase, Petrichel himself fell down on the ground and sank into a deep sleep.

When our friends had slept their fill, they rubbed their eyes, got up, and made ready to go on, when the one upon whose forehead the pigeon

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had rested said to the other, "What a wonderful dream I have had!"

"What did you dream?" asked Petrichel.

"Of marvelous things, friend. I thought I was in a plain all sown with flowers, and after wandering about a little I came upon a marble palace, and when I went inside I felt as much at home as if I were in my own house. I entered by the door and went through all the rooms, then I left by a window and entered it once again. Everywhere there were couches covered with silk, and beautiful mirrors framed in gold, and other splendid furnishings. And all seemed to belong to me. Nevertheless, for some reason, I had to leave it. So, after passing through a grassy glade, I came up to a rock and stumbled upon a cleft in it, and when I looked inside the crevice, what should I find but an old jar so mouldy with dampness that I could not bear to touch it. However, in spite of my disgust, I said, 'Let happen what will!' and so lifted the cover. What did I see within? A treasure, my friend, a treasure! I filled my pockets, my cap, and my belt with the gold pieces, and yet the jar was not empty. So I set out laden like a donkey, leaving the jar half full

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and planning to go back and find you, so that you, too, might help me carry away the gold. I returned by way of the palace, but without entering it, for I was in great haste — then I remembered no more and woke up to find myself as poor as ever!"

Whilst his companion was reciting his dream, Petrichel smiled, and at the end he said: —

"Ah, friend! What you cannot do all alone, perhaps we may accomplish between us. Come, let us hunt the money; what say you?"

"Poor fellow! Are you crazy? What money shall we hunt? I tell you a dream, and you flare up like tinder. We can't find any treasure, alas!"

However, Petrichel spoke so seriously that his friend resolved to follow him, though it was against his judgment, and in his heart he ridiculed the plan. So they took the road indicated by the pigeon and arrived at the spot where lay the horse's skull, and Petrichel showed it to his friend, saying, "Behold your palace of marble in which you wandered and were so well amused."

The other regarded him out of the corner of his eye, thinking, "Either Petrichel is crazy or he is mocking me."

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But he said nothing, only followed his guide, at the same time putting himself on guard against further nonsense and resolving to draw back if his companion dealt in any more stories of the other world. They walked along until they came to the rocky hillock, where Petrichel said in positive fashion to the other, "Here it is!"

"Here is what?" asked the man of dreams in surprise.

"The treasure, by Heaven! But listen: whatever we find is to be equally divided between us."

"You may have it all," was on the tip of the dreamer's tongue; but thinking better of it, he said, half in jest and half in earnest: "So be it! An equal division, for are we not old friends?"

They had not taken ten steps inside the cleft until they arrived before an old jar all covered with mould. Before touching it they looked at each other and uttered cries of astonishment. Finally, lifting off the cover, they stood dumb with amazement, for the jar was full to the brim of beautiful, bright gold pieces. And good and loving friends that they were, they divided the treasure equally between them, swearing loyalty to each other as long as they should live.

THE BEAUTIFUL UNKNOWN



HERE was once a very wise and gracious emperor whose achievements were respected far and near, so much so that whenever a dispute arose amongst the neighboring rulers, this emperor was called in to settle it, for all the world valued his justice and adroitness. When he arrived upon the threshold of old age, a son was born to him, and his happiness in having an heir was indescribable.

THE BEAUTIFUL UNKNOWN

The neighboring sovereigns sent splendid gifts to the newborn child, for they, too, rejoiced in the good fortune of the ruler whose wisdom was so useful to them.

When the boy was old enough, he began to study, and he was so diligent that his teachers were astonished at his accomplishments. That which other children learned in a year, he mastered in a week. Soon his teachers had no more to teach him, so his father invited celebrated philosophers to come to court for the boy's instruction. They accepted the imperial invitation, and the young prince learned from them all that it was possible to know. He was trained also in the art of hunting by the most celebrated master of the hunt in the world. And as the lad grew, his beauty kept pace with his wisdom, and great was his father's joy to see his son surpass all the other sons of emperors in his qualities of mind and person.

Scarcely had the young prince's mustache begun to grow when the neighboring rulers sent ambassadors to his father's court with proposals of marriage, but the lad had no desire to marry so young.

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One fine day on his way to the hunt, the prince encountered a turtle-dove. Full of pity for its weakness, he had no wish to kill it; besides, he was in search of more formidable prey, for he was an accomplished hunter. But in the end, when he saw the turtle-dove flying always before him, he sent an arrow after it and wounded it in the wing. In spite of its wound, the bird flew on and disappeared in the clouds. As soon as the prince saw the turtle-dove pass out of sight, he felt a strange beating of the heart, and he became sad and absent-minded. His father noticed his mood and questioned him, but the young man declared it was nothing.

Now, the bird which he had wounded was the fairy of the mountains. She had become enamored of the prince's charms, but she was unwilling to appear before him in the shape of a fairy, so she had transformed herself into a bird and had hovered near him until he had winged her. She hesitated to make herself known to the young man for fear of appearing bold and forward.

Some days after this adventure, a poor young woman came to the court to seek employment,

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and as there was need of a goose-girl, she was engaged to tend the fowls. Her neatness and the good care which she gave to the geese and poultry became the subject of comment. Even the empress noticed her cleverness, and spoke in high terms of her to the emperor, and interested herself in the affairs of the poor young woman.

The prince heard so much of the amiability and talents of the goose-girl that he became curious to see her, so one day when his mother went to inspect the fowls, the young man accompanied her. As soon as the goose-girl saw the prince she cast upon him a look so full of love and tenderness that the young man was troubled. His cheeks were on fire, a cold sweat broke out on him, and his heart thumped as if it would burst out of his breast. Fearing that his agitation might be noticed, he lowered his eyes and returned hurriedly to the palace.

About this time the son of a near-by emperor took a wife, and the prince and his parents were invited to the wedding. They accepted with pleasure and set out for the neighboring court. The day of their departure the goose-girl begged that she might be spared for a short time, and the

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steward granted her request, asking jestingly if she meant to go to court with the imperial party.

Arrived at the foreign court, the emperor was proud to see his son the handsomest and most agreeable prince present. All the princesses were eager to dance with him, and he courteously attended on each of them by turn.

Suddenly in the midst of the dancing, a beautiful young stranger arrived, more charmingly dressed than any of the princesses. Her lovely hair was arranged with great art and fell to her ankles; she was slender and elegant and carried herself with distinction.

Every eye was fixed on her as she walked straight to the prince, placed herself next him in the figure, and danced with him the entire evening. They talked and they laughed and they said many things to each other, but always in a low tone, for the prince had too much respect for his parents to speak in a loud voice in their presence.

All the other princes became jealous when they saw that the beautiful unknown had eyes only for her partner and danced with him alone. As

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for the prince, himself, he did not know what to make of his feelings; he was like another creature, so happy and light-hearted had he become. He resolved before the last *farandole*¹ to ask the lovely maiden her name, from whence she came, and if she were free to marry, for in that case he wished to offer himself as a suitor. But suddenly, before he could carry out his resolve, the beautiful unknown vanished like a ghost and left the son of the emperor astonished and full of disappointment. He returned to his home, but his thoughts were always with the fair stranger.

When his father saw him so absent-minded and out of humor, he did all he could to distract him, and when the young man was again invited to a wedding at a neighboring court, the emperor urged him to go and prepared to go with him. As before, the beautiful unknown was present and danced with no one but the prince. After much quizzing he learned that she lived in his own country; in fact, she finally admitted that she lived in the neighborhood of the imperial palace itself. Upon this, the prince begged to accompany her to her home and she gave her permis-

¹ *Farandole*, a Roumanian dance.

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sion. Nevertheless, at the end of the *farandole*, she again disappeared mysteriously.

The emperor and his suite returned to their homes, and the prince, in chagrin, kept to his own apartments. This was the occasion of remark, and some even went so far as to say that the prince was under an enchantment. His father remonstrated with him, but he was silent and morose. The doctors and astrologers of the court were consulted, but they could learn nothing, though one hazarded the suggestion that the young man had fallen in love with a fairy.

For the third time the emperor was bidden to a wedding, but he had no desire to go, so great was his anxiety about his son. However, the prince insisted, and so his father gave way. The young man had conceived a plot and he wished to carry it out. He called upon some of his most devoted companions to borrow several copper kettles, and to bring them to the wedding filled with tar, and to pour the contents along the road in front of the palace, after the guests had assembled.

Again the beautiful unknown appeared at the beginning of the *farandole* and began to dance

THE BEAUTIFUL UNKNOWN

near the prince. She was so sumptuously dressed that she rivaled the sun in splendor, and the princes all looked upon her with as much longing as if she had been a ripe cherry. Though she again promised her lover to allow him to see her home, she disappeared as before at the end of the evening, in the most mysterious fashion, like the fairy that she was.

The prince was more forlorn than ever and refused to be comforted. But just at this moment his devoted companions brought him a small and beautifully shaped slipper which the fair unknown had left sticking in the tar. So the emperor ordered his pages to go from house to house and oblige all the women to try on the slipper, proclaiming that the one who could wear it should become the wife of the prince.

Thus the slipper was tried on by every woman in the kingdom, but it fitted none of them. The prince was overcome with disappointment and threatened to languish and die of grief, when suddenly the empress remembered the goose-girl and asked if she, too, had been shown the slipper. No, declared the pages, for no one had thought of her.

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So the empress ordered the slipper to be carried to her, and the moment she put out her foot one could see that the little shoe had been made for it, for it fitted to perfection. Nevertheless, she denied that it belonged to her, but when she was led before the prince, he gave her one glance and cried, "It is she."

Thus confronted with her lover, the goose-girl was forced to overcome her scruples and reveal her identity. She told how she had seen the prince at the hunt and become enamored of him, how she had flitted before him in the shape of a turtle-dove and how he had wounded her wing. She had not been willing to reveal herself, because in marrying a mortal she would lose her divine power. She also told how her love for the gallant young man had led her to assume the duties of a goose-girl, in order to be near him.

Finally she clapped her hand three times, and a chariot drawn by three horses appeared at the gate of the palace, and it was filled with her trousseau, which was indescribably rich and beautiful. Then, with tears in her eyes, the fairy turned toward the prince and said:—

"For love of you, prince, I relinquish my

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divine power, and to recompense me, you must love me as dearly as I love you."

The prince was overcome with joy and took her in his arms with many assurances of his affection. In a short time their wedding was celebrated with imperial splendor, and after the death of his father, the prince ascended the throne, where he still reigns, unless he is dead.



THE PEASANT'S CLEVER DAUGHTER



THE PEASANT'S CLEVER DAUGHTER



ONCE upon a time there was a peasant and his wife so poor, so poor that they had neither house, furniture, nor clothing. Worse than that, they had nothing under the sun, not even a cup out of which to drink water. The poor unfortunates had to toil, with sweating brows, from the break of day till the rising of the moon to gain the least little bit, which

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was hardly more than nothing at all. Bad luck clung to them like dust to a dog's back.

They wandered from one place to another with a bundle of rags over their shoulders, never finding any place to stay for long, for who wanted to put up this penniless couple with their brood of children? For I forgot to tell you that our poor vagabonds had in their quiver a stringful of urchins. The eldest were girls, the rest boys, a whole row of them, like a lot of little pots, diminishing in size all the way down the line.

Be thankful that you were not on hand, dear children, when the good man came in each night from his work. You would have wanted to run away at the sight of this heap of urchins tumbling out to meet him, dirty and ragged, pale and skinny, rushing under his heels and howling at the top of their lungs, "Papa, give us some supper, we are about to starve!"

Quite dazed by such an uproar, the poor man never knew which one to answer, and so let the whole swarm pounce on the few crusts he had and gobble them up in a trice. Even then each one had hardly more than a few crumbs to put under his teeth.

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Oftentimes the poor father and mother went to bed supperless, their hearts wrung with pity; but what could they do? To gain peace, they promised the children all they could eat on the morrow, but the little brats were not satisfied and fell asleep, whining and complaining, in the end dreaming of bowls of porridge and jugs of milk.

The eldest daughter was the pick of the flock, a gentle and quick-witted girl. When her parents were at work, she looked after her little sisters and brothers, taught them what she could, and begged them to be patient so as to save their poor mother and father all the trouble possible. But she might as well have beaten a drum in front of a deaf man! Poor things! They might have been good and gentle if they had had enough porridge in their stomachs.

One day the noble, upon whose land these vagabonds were passing their miserable existence as if abandoned by God, took compassion on them and said to the father who came to beg for a lodging: "Good man, I see you are industrious and willing to work, but you are wearing yourself out and gaining nothing. Listen! I will give you

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for life a bit of land which you may choose, and on it you may build a *bordei*.¹

"Thank you, thank you, generous master! Allow me to kiss your hands," joyfully replied the poor man; "and may God reward you a hundredfold!"

And full of hope, the peasant hastened to choose a bit of land, and so great was his energy that before night he had dug out a great trench in which to shape his *bordei*. But ill-luck led him to settle on a spot next door to another peasant, a proud, prosperous fellow, so puffed up that he looked scornfully at everybody over the end of his nose.

During the night (nobody knows how it happened) the proud peasant's cow took a notion to tumble into the freshly dug hole and so broke her bones. Next morning her owner found the carcass and began to abuse his poor neighbor, seizing him by the collar and dragging him before the lord of the land to get justice.

The latter was greatly astonished when he saw the rustics approaching and demanded what had happened. The proud peasant said, with much

¹ *Bordei*, a cave-like hut dug out of the earth and covered with branches and dried mud.

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assurance: "My lord, this good-for-nothing, arrived from nobody-knows-where in our town, after having accepted a bit of land from your bounty, has had the insolence to choose a piece next door to my house! The barefoot beggar then digs a ditch as deep as a well in which to shape his *bordei*, without having the sense to cover it over during the night, and the best of my cows has fallen in and broken her neck. I beseech you to force him to pay me for my loss. He says he has not a red farthing, but what is that to me?"

"My lord," sighed the poor man in his turn, his eyes filled with tears, — "my lord, I can only answer that ill-luck always follows me. So kill me, hang me, if such be your pleasure! Otherwise, since God loves the truth, here is how it happened: I dug a deep hole for my *bordei* because I have so many children to fill it, but I did not dream of wronging my neighbor, and never did I think of being presumptuous, because I have nothing to be presumptuous about, and it was by accident that I chose my bit of land next to his house. Now, may God give you grace to judge between us two."

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The noble hesitated; he did not know what to say; he could, indeed, see that the poor man had been at fault, but his intentions were not evil. After having reflected awhile, he replied: "Listen, rustics! I am going to ask you three riddles, and the one who answers them gains his cause. You have three days in which to ponder them. On the third day I shall expect you. So do not forget my riddles. Attention! The first is as follows, What is the *fattest* thing in the world? The second, What is the *fastest* thing in the world? The third, What is the *best* thing in the world? Now, be off! And remember, at least, that he who cannot find a good answer to my riddles may search for his head between his great toes."¹

And so the two peasants made off. The rich man flattered himself that he could easily guess the answers. It was plain enough to see that his *pig* was the fattest thing in the world. Did it not have five fingers of fat above its ribs?

But the poor man wept fit to drown the earth, doubting that he could ever find a suitable reply. His children gathered around him in a circle, not daring to question him. Finally they, too, began

¹ In this fashion was a man buried when decapitated.

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to weep, and such a chorus of lamentation rent the air as caused one to tremble with pity. At last the eldest child took her courage in both hands and asked her father what in the world had happened to cause him such affliction.

"What has happened, my poor child?" said he. "Well, our noble master, to punish me for my sins, has given me three riddles, such terrible riddles that the wisest man in the world would stand gaping before them — much more so a poor ignorant wretch like me."

"What are they, father? Tell us, and maybe we can help you to guess."

"Help me, you poor urchins, when you do not even know with which hand to eat your porridge?"

"Tell us, in any case, father. It may not do any good, but neither will it do any harm."

So the good man gave them the riddles, the three terrible riddles to which he must reply unless he wished to hunt for his head between his great toes.

The eldest child thought and thought, and after she had thought all she could possibly think, she drew near her father and said:—

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“There, there, father! Cheer up and be less sad! God does not wish you any harm. When you go before our master, I will whisper two words in your ear, and perhaps it will be to your advantage to listen.”

The peasant pretended to comfort himself a little. What was really passing in the bottom of his heart no one knows, but he tried to look cheerful so as not to cause his children too much grief. On the morning of the third day his daughter told him what to reply, at which the poor fellow tried to appear content, but his heart misgave him just the same.

Finally, the two appeared before their judge — the rich peasant with his chest puffed out and his head held high; the poor man pitiful and bent under his rags, as if he were trying to sink out of sight.

The noble addressed himself to the rich man:—

“Well, my good man, what is the fattest thing in the world?”

“Indeed, master,” answered the foolish fellow with assurance, “there is nothing in the world fatter than my pig, for he has five fingers of fat under his hide.”

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“Wrong!” growled the noble.

Then stammered timidly the poor man:—

“My little master, in my weak judgment, the fattest thing in the world is the soil of the land, for out of it comes everything else.”

“True!” cried the noble.

Then, turning to the rich peasant:—

“What is the *fastest* thing in the world?”

“My stallion, I wager,” said he, “for when I loose the bridle over his neck, he gallops so fast over mountain and valley that one cannot see a trace of his hoofs.”

“You lie!” shouted the noble.

Then humbly ventured the poor man:—

“Little master, I who have neither horse nor pig, I believe rather that there is nothing in the world so fast as thought.”

“You have guessed again,” cried the noble.

And addressing himself the third time to the rich man:—

“What is the *best* thing in the world?”

And the foolish upstart answered:—

“There is nothing in the world, noble master, so good as the justice of your lordship.”

Then the poor peasant in his turn:—

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“As for me, little master, out of my small wisdom, for which I humbly crave your pardon, I am forced to believe that the mercy of God is the best thing in the world, for it is that which bears with all our folly.”

“No man could have answered better,” cried the noble.

And walking toward the imbecile of a rich peasant, with his fist raised, he threatened:—

“Be off, stupid animal! Out from here, insolent hypocrite! or my knaves will give you such a basfinado on the soles of your feet as to flay your skin.”

And the proud fellow slunk away like a whipped dog.

Then the master, calling the poor man nearer, asked him softly:—

“Friend, who taught you to reply so aptly? For I doubt that such wise answers could have come out of your thick skull.”

The poor fellow stammered a moment. He hardly dared tell the truth for fear of a rating, but, finding himself up against a wall, he confessed the affair as it was.

The noble, astonished at the cleverness of the

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peasant's daughter, ordered her father to have her appear before him, but in such fashion: neither naked nor clothed, neither on foot nor on horse, neither on the road nor off the road.

When the poor man understood what lay before him, he began to tear his hair, and, as he approached his hut, he moaned and groaned in fearful fashion. When the eldest daughter was informed of the strange demands of the noble, she said to her father:—

“There, there, little father! Don't be so put about. I will show our master a few things. The only way in which you can aid me is to find me two cats.”

The following morning the young girl wrapped herself in a fish net, took a cat under each arm, mounted a goat, and set out for the noble's house. Equipped in such a fashion she was neither on horseback nor on foot; she traveled neither in the road nor out of it, for the goat, grazing along the way, wandered between the ditch and the hedge, cropping a mouthful here and there; and clad only in a fish net, the peasant's daughter was neither dressed nor naked.

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And so she arrived at the noble's mansion. When the master and his attendants saw her decked out in such strange guise, they stared at her in amazement. Surprised at her clever trick, the noble wished to test her adroitness still further, so he ordered his two great watch-dogs turned loose, and, excited by this strange equipage, the beasts rushed upon the poor girl. But she threw the two cats upon them as they advanced and so diverted their attack. It was in such fashion that she came up to the noble, carrying out, with the utmost nicety, all his demands. And the noble, overcome by her wit, was forced to receive her. He ordered her to be led to the bath and to be clothed in new garments, with the intention of giving her in marriage to a certain fellow in his service and favor. But when he saw her all washed and clothed like a bride, he found her so charming that he hit upon the idea of marrying her himself. Before the wedding he said to the young woman:—

“In taking you for my wife, only one condition do I impose upon you: Never judge between two disputants in my absence.”

She promised to obey him.

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Only a short time passed before her husband set out on a journey through his domain, and during his absence two peasants came to submit a difficulty to their master, and as the lady was crossing the corridor at the moment of their arrival, they began to explain their quarrel. She listened in silence.

The first one said:—

“I had planned to go on a journey, but a wheel of my cart was broken and I did not choose to put my mare to a lame cart for fear it would damage her, so I begged this man, my neighbor, to lend me a wheel. He brought it to me in the evening, so that I could set out early next day. But during the night my mare dropped a foal —”

At this point his neighbor broke in:—

“God forbid, mistress, that you should believe this man. It was not his mare that dropped the foal, it was my cart wheel, and the foal belongs to me.”

The wife of the noble continued to listen without answering a word.

The peasants waited for her to speak, and, seeing that she did not mean to judge between them, they finally broke the silence.

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“Pardon us, good mistress, will you tell us where your husband is?”

“Yes,” said she, “he has gone to the pond to see the frogs prepare barley broth for their supper.”

The peasants stared at her in surprise and withdrew respectfully. On arriving at the gate of the court, they spoke up:—

“Well, well, lad! Our lady has told us a fine story!”

“Yes, that was a good one, that tale about the frogs!”

And so they turned again toward their mistress to ask her what she meant. Re-entering the corridor, they began to speak:—

“Here we are again, mistress; just one word, if it pleases you. We do not understand about the frogs. How can they prepare barley broth for their supper?”

“It is not for me to say, good fellows,” replied the lady; “perhaps in the same way that a cart wheel can drop a foal.”

The peasants felt the sting of her wit and it brought them to their senses, so they departed amicably.

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When the noble returned from his journey, he asked his wife if anything had happened during his absence, or if any one had come to the court with complaints. She told him about the peasants and how she had got the best of them. When she finished, her husband replied:—

“Since you have broken your promise and given judgment in my absence, we can no longer live together. Therefore, choose that thing in my house which is dearest to you and return to your father.”

His wife answered:—

“Your words, dear husband, are sacred to me; it is in order to be obeyed that man is man. But I am not guilty of any fault, because I did not judge between the complainants; I only told them where their master had gone. Nevertheless if you find it good to send me away, I will go without a murmur, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for letting me take with me the thing that is dearest to me. Now, I am about to ask a last favor of my lord and master since he is driving me away: Let there be rejoicing in the house before my departure, call in all our friends, and give them to eat and to drink and let every

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man amuse himself according to his pleasure
before our separation."

The noble consented and ordered a great feast made ready, to which he invited all his friends and kindred, and each one ate, drank, and amused himself according to his pleasure. The wife of the noble never allowed her husband's glass to become empty, and she poured out bumper after bumper, so that before midnight he was stupefied with drink.

Then she hoisted him gently on her back, without his knowing what she was about, and carried him to her father's *bordei*, put him to bed behind the oven, and left him to sleep his fill.

When the noble awakened the next day, with his head as heavy as a stone, he looked all about him and asked where he was. His wife replied:—

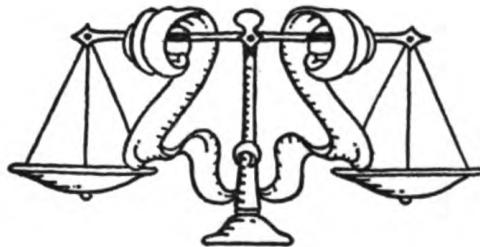
"You are at my father's *bordei*. When you drove me away, did you not give me permission to carry with me the thing that was dearest to me? I have obeyed you. Nothing is dearer to me than my lord and husband. Therefore, be not angry with me for having taken you."

When the noble heard these words, he was

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deeply moved, and remained some time in thought. Finally he said:—

“My dear, let us return to our home; it will seem from now on like paradise, for I never knew until this moment what a treasure of a wife I had.”

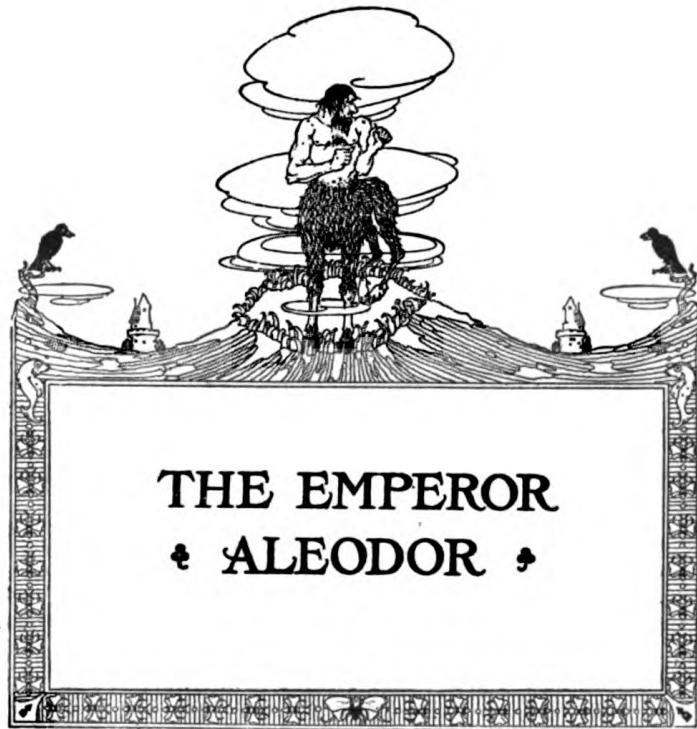


THE EMPEROR ALEODOR



THE EMPEROR ALEODOR





THE EMPEROR • ALEODOR •



NCE upon a time there was an emperor who had no children. He had grown to a ripe age without an heir, though he longed beyond telling for a son,—no matter how ugly and insignificant,—but it seemed that he must long in vain. However, toward the very end of his life his wish was granted and a son was born to him, and so beautiful was

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the boy that to see him was to remember him forever. The emperor summoned all his subjects from the east and the west, the north and the south, for the child's baptism, and bestowed upon him the name of Aleodor. The festivities lasted three days and three nights, and the guests ate and drank and enjoyed themselves to such an extent that they remembered it all their days.

As the boy grew and flourished, he became wiser and more lovable, and it was a cause of great sorrow to his imperial father to feel the approach of death and to know that he must soon part from his dearly loved son. As the end drew near, he took the boy on his knee and said to him:—

“Beloved child, God calls me to appear before Him, and the time has come for me to quit this world. I foresee that you will become a great man, and though I be dead and in my tomb, my bones shall rejoice in the glory of your exploits. As for the government of the empire, I shall not counsel you, for I know that with your wisdom you will govern well. I shall speak to you of only one thing: Do you see the mountain that towers above us? Promise me never to go near it to

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hunt, else misfortune will overtake you. This mountain is the domain of a terrible being, with the head and front of a centaur and the hind part of a lame hare, and whoever puts his foot upon the domain of this monster shall not go away unpunished."

After having spoken these words, the old emperor fell back upon his couch and died, according to the law which governs all terrestrial beings. His family wept over him, his nobles lamented him, the people mourned him, and in the end they were obliged to bury him.

Although Aleodor was still very young when he came to the throne, he governed the country like a ruler of experience, and his subjects were satisfied with his reign and proud to live under his dominion. He rode often to the hunt during his hours of leisure, but he recalled the words of his father and piously obeyed his advice. One fine day, however, being plunged in thought, he strayed without noticing it into the domain of the deformed creature. Hardly had he advanced twenty steps when he saw the monster before him. Aleodor regretted finding himself upon the land of this hideous creature, but he

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regretted even more having disobeyed the last words of his father.

The monster said to him:—

“All impious men who pass my frontier fall under my power.”

“You must know, first of all,” replied Aleodor, “that I came here without intention, so deeply was I absorbed in thought, and I have no evil designs toward you or your territory.”

“I had a different opinion of you,” said the monster, “but now I perceive that you make excuses like all cowards.”

“As God is my witness, I spoke only the truth,” replied Aleodor; “but since you wish a combat, you may choose the weapons. Shall we fight with swords, with clubs, or with our fists?”

“With neither the one nor the other. If you wish to escape punishment, there is only one means that will save you: bring me the daughter of the Green Emperor, that I may take her to wife.”

Aleodor made many objections to this: the affairs of his empire would not permit him to quit the country; he had no guide to conduct him thither, etc.; but the monster would listen to

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none of these things. He insisted that Aleodor bring him the daughter of the Green Emperor, else he should suffer the fate of all brigands and violators of the property of others.

The young man felt himself at fault, for though his intentions were not dishonorable, he knew he had erred in entering the domain of the monster, and he also knew that it were better to accede to the request of this evil creature if he wished to save his life. So he promised to render him the service which he had demanded.

This centaur with the hind part of a lame hare knew that Aleodor would keep his promise because he was a man of honor; therefore he said:—

“Go, and may you be successful.”

So Aleodor set out, wondering how he should fulfill his mission. Thus pondering he drew near a lake, and upon the bank he saw a pike floundering about and trying to get back into the water. He approached the fish to seize him, for he was hungry. But the pike opened his mouth and spoke:—

“Do not harm me, prince; rather throw me back into the water, for I can render you a greater service than you imagine.”

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Aleodor obeyed the fish and cast him back into the lake, and the fish said:—

“Take this scale, prince, and when you wish for me, I will come to you.”

The young man walked away astonished at this adventure, and before long he came across a raven with a broken wing. He was about to send an arrow at the bird to put him out of his pain, but the latter said to him:—

“Prince, why burden your soul with my death? You would do better to mend my wing, because I can be of use to you.”

So Aleodor, having a merciful heart, obeyed the raven. After mending its wing, the young man turned to depart, and the bird said:—

“Take this feather, gallant prince, and when you wish for me, I shall be near at hand.”

More and more surprised, Aleodor took the feather and set out, but he had not advanced a hundred feet when he saw a gadfly. He was about to crush it under his foot when the insect said:—

“Spare my life, Emperor Aleodor, and I will save you from death. Take the down off my wing and when you wish for me I shall be with you.”

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Overcome by these words, and at being addressed by name, the emperor lifted his foot and spared the gadfly.

After many days of journeying, Aleodor found himself before the palace of the Green Emperor. He posted himself in front of the gate and waited for some one to ask him his business. One day passed, then two, then three, and on the third day the Green Emperor sent for his servitors, and said to them:—

“Why do you leave this man in front of my palace for three days without asking him his business? Do I pay you your wages for nothing, idlers?”

The servitors did not know what to reply, so they sought out Aleodor and led him before the Green Emperor.

“What do you want, good man?” asked the ruler; “and why do you stand thus before the gate of my palace?”

“Glorious emperor, I would like —” began Aleodor, then hesitated. “I would like — I am sent, rather, to demand the hand of your daughter.”

“So be it, young man. But before considering

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your request, I shall put you to a test, for such is the custom of our court. You have my permission to hide wherever you like for three consecutive days, and should my daughter find you, then you must lose your head, and it shall be placed on the end of a stake amongst a hundred others, which already bear the heads of men. But if she finds you not, then you may take her, with all the honors due an imperial bride."

"Glorious emperor," replied Aleodor, "all my hope is in God, who in his great mercy will not leave me to perish. We shall employ the stake for something else than the head of a man. Let us make the pact."

"You agree?" asked the emperor.

"I agree," replied the young man.

They made the pact and signed it; at the same moment the young princess entered and took part in their council. She was informed that Aleodor had signed the pact and would hide himself for three consecutive days with all the cleverness at his command.

So they left him alone, and he strode up and down the chamber, greatly agitated, not so much from a fear of death, but because of his great

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desire to succeed at any price and vindicate his honor. He pondered long over the best ways of hiding himself, balancing one way against another, and growing more and more confused, when suddenly he remembered the pike which he had cast back into the lake. He took the scale from his pocket, gazed at it, and thought of its owner, when, behold! the fish appeared before him!

“What do you wish, and how can I serve you, prince?” asked the pike.

And Aleodor explained his predicament and sought the fish’s advice, and the latter promised his aid. Tapping the young man with his tail, he turned him into a minnow and hid him at the bottom of the sea amidst all the other little fishes.

When the daughter of the Green Emperor left her bed in the morning, she took her magic glasses and looked on all sides. She saw nothing. All her other suitors had concealed themselves in cellars, in houses, behind haystacks, or in abandoned caves, but Aleodor was so well hidden that the young girl became uneasy, fearing to be outwitted. Then the thought came to her to look in the sea, and there she found him amidst all the

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other little fishes. Her glasses were, indeed, enchanted!

“Come out from there, rascal!” cried she, laughing merrily. “How were you able to shrink into such a little fish? How came a great fellow like you to turn into such a tiny creature and hide on the bottom of the sea?”

So there was nothing left for the poor fellow to do but to come up from his hiding-place.

And the princess said to her father, the emperor:—

“Father, to all appearances, this young man nearly got the best of me. He is handsome and courageous and cleverer than I. So be pleased to spare him if I should succeed in finding him the third time, for one can readily see that he is not so stupid as the other suitors; on the contrary, he is a person of distinction.”

“We shall see,” answered the emperor, and he would promise nothing.

The next day Aleodor thought of the raven, and in the twinkling of an eye the bird appeared before him and said:—

“What will you have, master?”

“Listen, friend, what has happened to me, and

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see if you can get me out of my scrape," said the prince.

So the grateful bird tapped the young man with his wing and transformed him into a young raven and thrust him into a cloud which floated up above all the other clouds.

When the princess left her bed she again took her glasses and looked on all sides, but she saw nothing. She searched the land, the rivers, and the seas, but without success. She became very uneasy; half the day had passed without a trace of the prince. Quite discouraged, she swept the heavens with her glasses, and there she perceived Aleodor in the immensity of space, hidden in a cloud, in the shape of a young raven. She made a sign to him with her finger and said:—

"Oh, jester, you are very cunning! Come down quickly. You thought that by taking the form of a raven you could escape me, but I can follow you even as far as paradise itself."

So the poor fellow came down, because he could not do otherwise.

The emperor began to marvel at Aleodor's cleverness, and felt more and more inclined to grant the prayer of his daughter and spare the

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young man. But since the pact stipulated that he conceal himself three times, the emperor said:—

“Out of curiosity we shall see if he can hide himself successfully this last time.”

So on the third day, very early in the morning, the young man thought of the gadfly. The latter appeared at once and Aleodor explained his predicament.

“Have faith in me,” said the insect, “and if the princess finds you this time, I shall be responsible.”

So he transformed the young man into a gnat and hid him in the meshes of the princess's hair while she was still asleep. Soon afterward she awakened and left her bed, and, taking up her magic glasses, she sought Aleodor all day long without finding him. She was greatly vexed and bewildered, for though she felt that the prince was near her, yet she could not discover him. She swept the earth, the air, and the water, but he was to be found nowhere. Toward evening, worn out with her efforts, she cried: “Show yourself, prince! I know you are near by, but I cannot see you. I yield — you have beaten me.”

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And when Aleodor heard her admit her defeat, he came out noiselessly from her braided tresses and showed himself. The Green Emperor had no cause for objection, and so yielded up his daughter, and she was conducted with great pomp and splendor as far as the frontier of the empire.

After journeying some distance, the young couple stopped to rest and to dine, after which Aleodor laid his head on the knees of the princess and fell asleep, and she was so charmed with his beauty that she leaned over and kissed him. The young man awoke and gave her a box on the ears which could be heard a long way off. She began to weep and said:—

“Oh, dear Aleodor, why did you give me such a cruel blow?”

“I gave you a box because of your kiss. For you must know that I have not worked to gain you for myself, but for him that sent me after you.”

And the daughter of the Green Emperor was in great distress, for she had fallen in love with Aleodor. But she was now far from home, so what could she do but go where he led her? So they set out again and soon arrived at the

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domain of the centaur with the hind part of a lame hare.

“I have fulfilled my mission,” said Aleodor and turned to depart.

But when the daughter of the Green Emperor found herself in the company of such an abominable monster, she shivered with disgust and begged to be taken away at any price.

The monster drew near the young girl and tried to win her with soft and loving words. But the princess cried:—

“Get out of my sight, miserable one, and descend into the regions of the Devil from whence you came!”

But the deformed creature was consumed with love of her and groveled at her feet, humble and threatening by turns. He tried by every means in his power to induce her to marry him, but she withdrew from his reach and kept him at a distance, casting words of disdain and reproach in his ears.

Finally, quite beside himself with love and rage, the monster bounded upon her to take her by force, but she leaped nimbly aside, and because of his lameness, the deformed creature stum-

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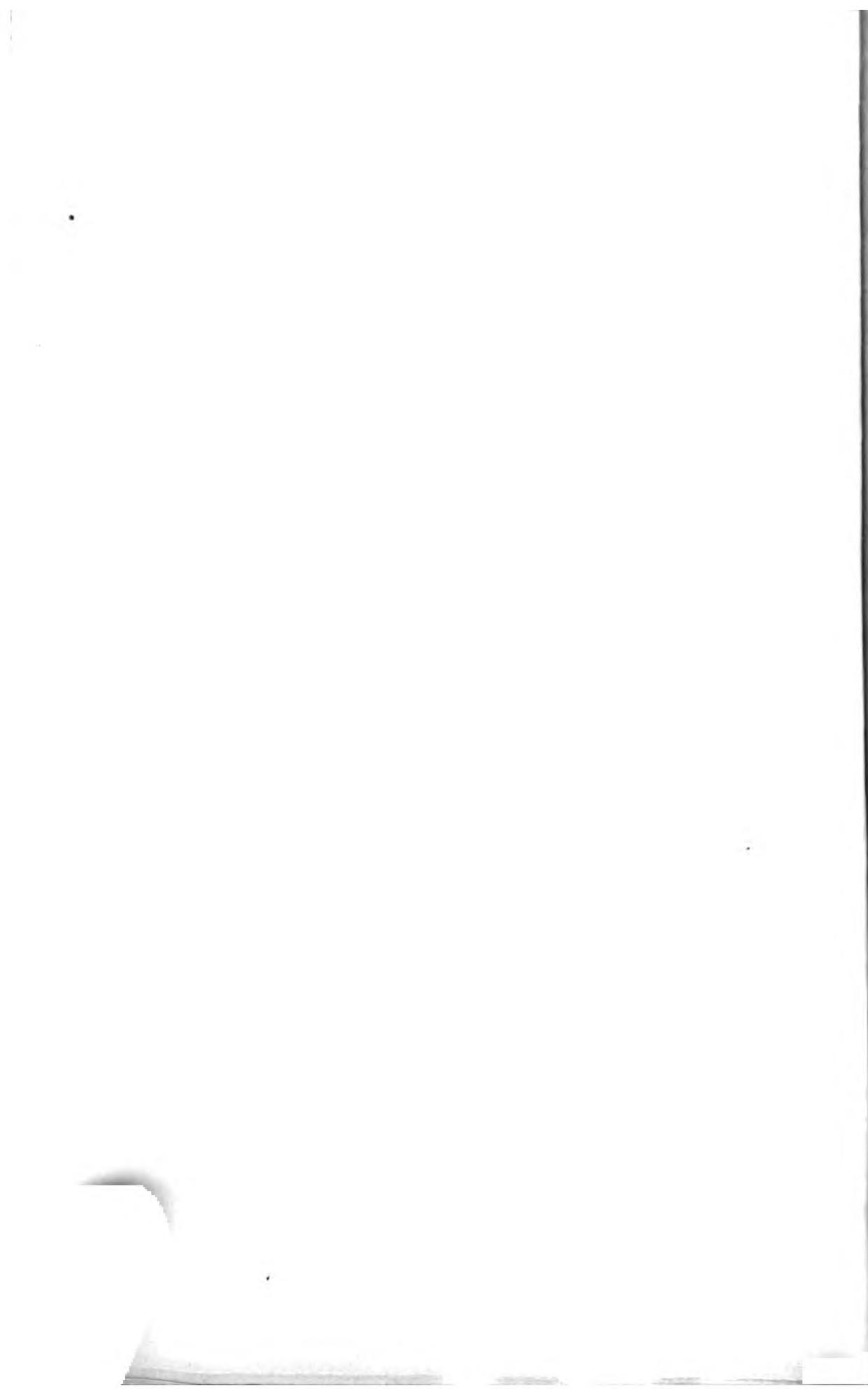
bled and fell heavily over the mountain-side and was dashed to pieces on the rocks and stumps.

So Aleodor took the daughter of the Green Emperor to wife, seized the territory of the centaur with the hind part of a lame hare, and returned to his own empire. There his people came out to meet him with drums, trumpets, and fifes, and rejoiced to see their ruler safe and sound and leading by his side a wife who was so beautiful that the stars themselves smiled upon her.

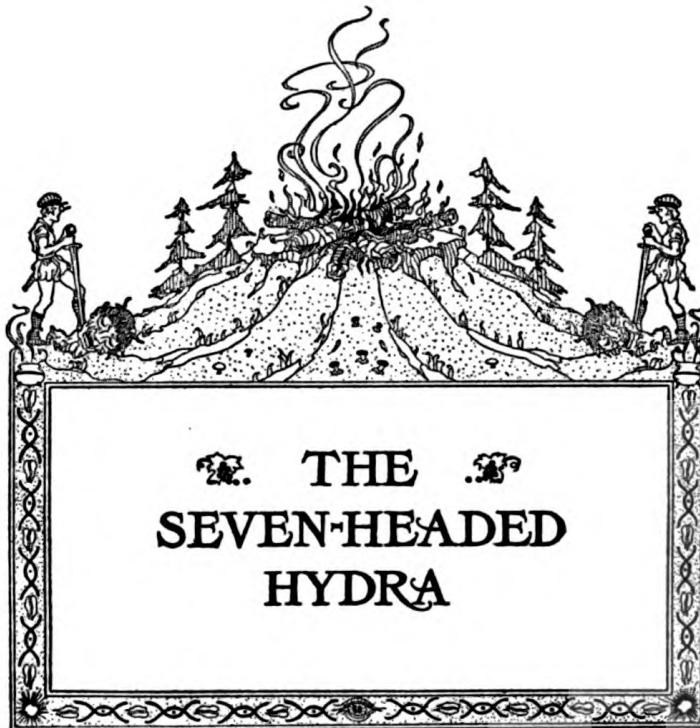
And Aleodor again mounted the throne, where he ruled wisely and lived happily until the end of his life —

Whilst I, who fly o'er hill and dale,
My pouch doth stuff with many a tale.

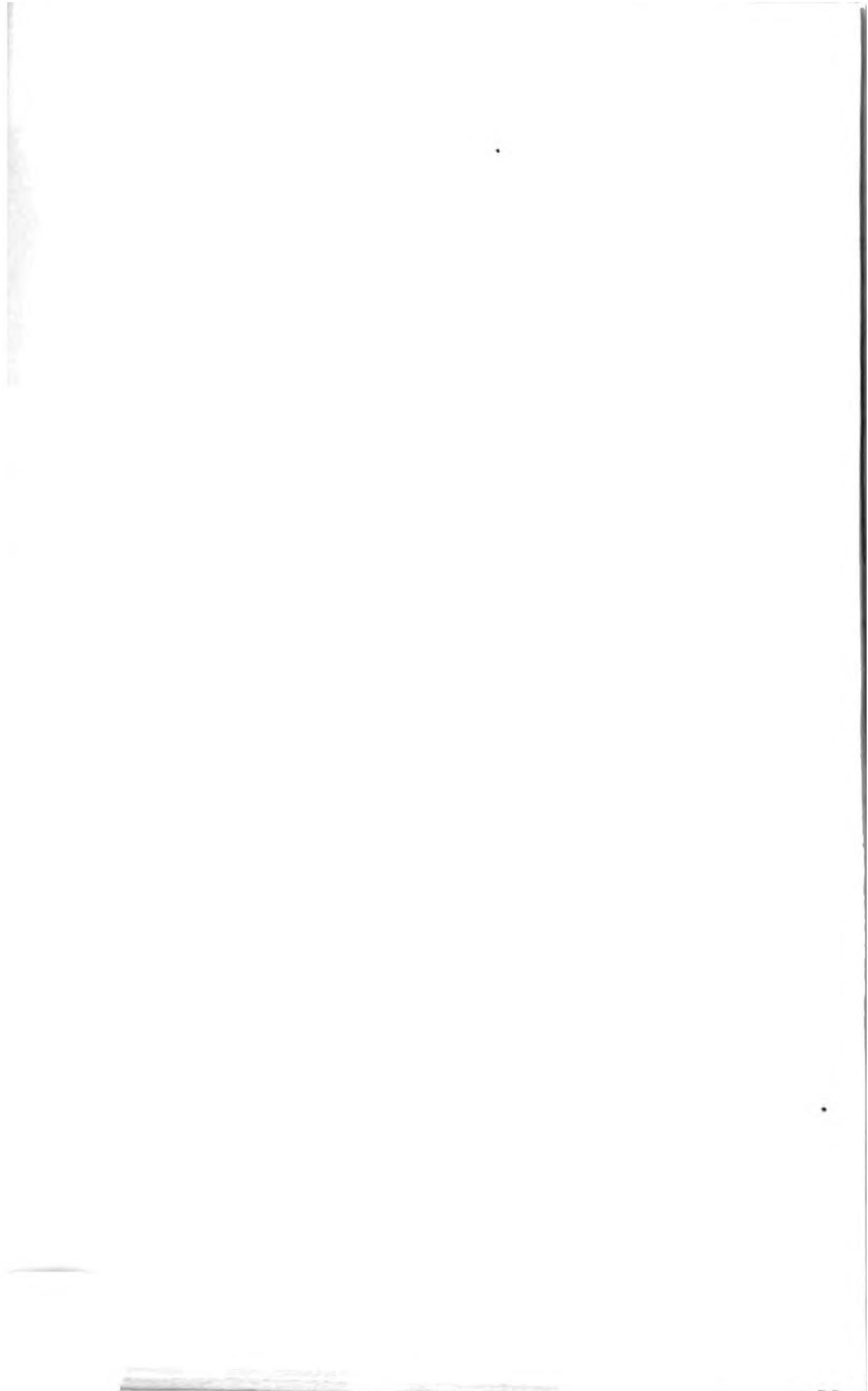


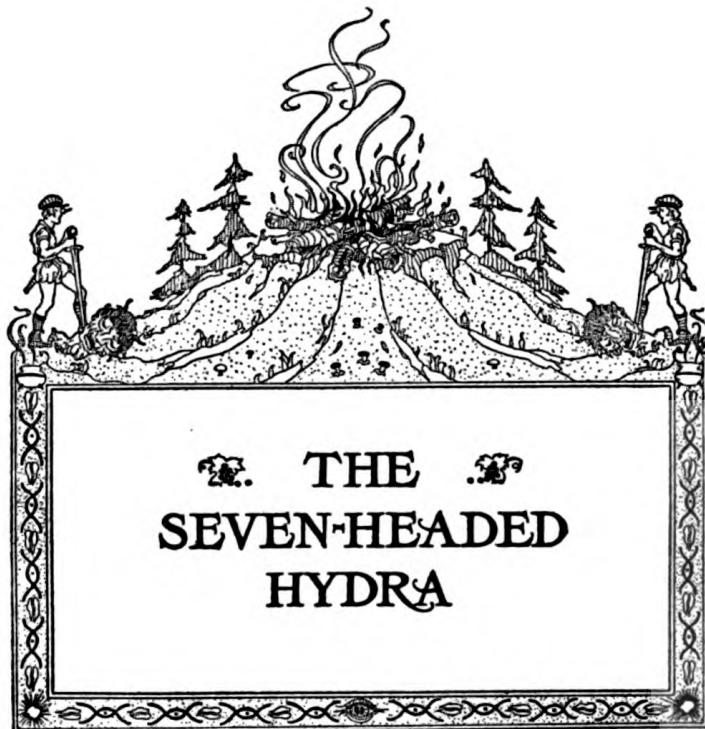


THE SEVEN-HEADED HYDRA



NCE upon a time in a far distant country there dwelt a hydra with seven heads. This terrible beast lived in a dark den and ate human flesh. When the monster came out from its hole to seek prey, all the people hid away in their homes and kept behind lock and key until the hydra had satisfied its hunger by devouring some wanderer whom destiny had led to his death. All the inhabitants of





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the country complained bitterly of the wickedness of the hydra and of the fright and inconvenience it caused them.

They resorted to all possible means to get rid of it; they offered up prayers in the churches and marched in procession through the streets, beseeching God to deliver poor humanity from this insatiable beast, but all they did was in vain. Even the magicians and sorcerers of the country were helpless before the power of this seven-headed monster.

Finally, when the emperor saw that all his people's efforts were useless and that the prosperity of his country was at the mercy of this beast, he issued a proclamation saying that to any man who could deliver the land from the ravages of the hydra should be given the half of the empire and the hand of the imperial princess in marriage.

This proclamation was carried far and wide throughout the empire, and many brave men decided to watch together near the den of the hydra so that on its appearance they might fall upon it and slaughter it.

They assembled in the city nearest the mon-

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ster's hiding-place (which was on the outskirts of the town) and within sight of the monster's den. There they lighted a fire and each in his turn kept watch so that they might not be taken unawares; and in order that the sentinel might not fall asleep and leave the rest at the mercy of the foul beast, they concluded a pact that death should be meted out to the man who let the fire die out.

The company passed several days and nights in watching, but nothing happened. Now, amongst these braves was a valiant and adventurous Roumanian who had heard of the emperor's proclamation and who had come from his distant home to try his chance with the rest. One evening at twilight when our gallant Roumanian was keeping watch, the hydra came out from its den and made straight toward the company which slept near the fire. The heart of the sentinel leaped at sight of the monster, which advanced with snorts and hisses, and summoning all his courage, the Roumanian sprang upon the beast and slashed mightily with his sword until all seven of its heads lay on the ground.

It was a terrible spectacle to see the hydra

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writhe in agony and lash the earth with its tail. Though almost exhausted, the brave Roumanian fought without ceasing, for he did not wish to leave off until the monster was quite dead.

His companions slept soundly throughout this terrible conflict, in spite of the snorts and roars of the hydra; and after a supreme effort the young man finished off the beast single-handed. Dark blood flowed in torrents from the fallen monster and soon put out the watch-fire. The brave Roumanian was in great trouble, for had not the pact stated that he who allowed the fire to be extinguished should be put to death?

However, he cut out the seven tongues of the hydra and hid them in his breast; then he climbed to the top of the highest tree and looked on all sides to see if he could find a spark of light anywhere. He hoped thus to spy out some house wherein he might get a live coal with which to relight the fire. And in the far distance he saw a point of light which glimmered feebly. So he came down from the tree and set out in the direction of the light. He walked a long way, and in the midst of a forest he encountered the Twilight. He bound her fast where she stood so as to

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retard the coming of night. Then still farther on he met Midnight, and he, also, must be bound fast where he stood. But how was it to be done? In the end he persuaded Midnight to place his back against the tree which he was cutting, for, he explained, by pushing thus the tree would fall over readily and his labor would be shortened. This Midnight did, not suspecting a trap, and immediately the clever Roumanian bound him fast to the tree and kept on his way. Farther on he encountered the Dawn, but she did not wish to stop and gossip with him, for she must hasten to rejoin Midnight, who was a foolish fellow and needed watching. So it was more difficult to deal with her than with her predecessors, but he finally had her bound fast also.

Then he hurried on in his search. He arrived finally before a great cave, and inside glowed the light which he had seen from afar. Here was the home of the giants who have only one eye in the middle of their foreheads. Our brave fellow entered and begged for a little fire, but, instead of giving it him, they seized and bound him and put a great pot on the fire wherein to cook him so they might devour his flesh.

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But just at the moment when they were about to throw him into the pot, they heard a noise outside the cave, and all but one went out to look about. The one who stayed behind was a feeble old giant, and it was he who must put our Roumanian on to cook. As soon as the brave lad found himself alone with the old giant, he thought of a means to save himself. When the old man took off his bonds to throw him on the fire, the nimble fellow escaped from his grasp, seized a red-hot coal and thrust it in the giant's eye, then giving a push to the blind man he shoved him into the pot. He then took all the fire he needed and fled away, safe and sound.

He stopped before the Dawn and liberated her; then he passed on to where he had left Midnight tied to the tree and gave him his freedom. Finally, he reached Twilight, and, cutting her bonds, also sent her about her business. Arriving where he had left his companions, he found them still asleep.

Dawn was gilding the tops of the trees—soon the first rays of the sun would bathe the heads of the sleepers. The night had been very long, for our hero had arrested its course so that

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he might have time to find the fire upon which his life depended.

Scarcely had he relit the fire when his companions awakened and said:—

“What a long night this has been.”

“Yes, indeed, comrades,” answered the sentinel, as he blew up the fire.

The watchers got up and stretched their limbs and yawned, but a trembling seized them when they saw the enormous monster prone on the ground in a pool of blood, and they rubbed their eyes when they saw that all his heads were missing.

The brave Roumanian told nothing of what he had done from a fear of arousing their animosity and envy. So all set out for the town, and when they arrived there they found the people, big and little, rejoicing over the death of the hydra and giving thanks to the saints for the punishment of the enemy which they had so long feared, and loudly did they sing the praises of the man who had delivered them from the terrible monster.

The missing heads of the hydra had not caused our hero great uneasiness, for he had the proof of his brave deed safely hidden in his breast;

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nevertheless, he hastened toward the imperial palace. He wanted to find out what had become of these heads, for there was something suspicious in the affair.

As he drew near the gate of the palace, he questioned those about him, and he learned that the imperial cook, who was a very cunning gypsy, had gone out to spy on the watchers, driven by an overpowering curiosity. And, according to his tale, when he found them asleep and the monster lying in ambush near by, he had seized his carving-knife and attacked the beast single-handed and cut off the hydra's heads, and straightway took himself and his ghastly trophies before the emperor and claimed the reward of his exploit. He showed his garments, which he had been clever enough to dip in the monster's blood, and when the ruler was convinced that the gypsy was, indeed, the mighty hero that he claimed to be, he was as good as his word and ordered a great feast for the celebration of his daughter's betrothal with the cunning rascal.

When our hero arrived at the palace, he found the emperor in joyful humor, seated at table, and the cunning crow of a gypsy reclining beside him

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on seven cushions, in the place of honor. So the Roumanian presented himself before the ruler and said:—

“Glorious emperor, I have heard that some one has boasted before you of having slain the seven-headed hydra. It is false, imperial ruler, for it was I who killed the beast.”

“You lie, worthless fellow,” cried the gypsy, and ordered the servitors to turn him out.

But the emperor began to have his doubts, for it seemed improbable that the cook should have turned out such a mighty hero. So he turned toward the Roumanian and said:—

“How can you prove the truth of your words?”

“I can easily prove my claim, mighty emperor,” replied the brave lad. “First order an attendant to look inside the heads and see if he can find the tongues of the beast.”

“Let them search,” loudly retorted the black-amoor, who was beginning to tremble in spite of his bold air.

So they sought, and not a tongue could be found in any head, and the guests were mightily astonished.

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The gypsy began to have goose-flesh and bitterly regretted his boasting, yet he cried:—

“Put out the crazy fellow. His words are those of a fool.”

But the emperor replied:—

“You have only to show us, brave cook, that he who killed the hydra can account for his tongues.”

“Glorious emperor,” stammered the gypsy, who was trembling like a leaf and as pale as wax, “do you not see that this fellow is a half-wit who has come here to deceive us?”

“He who deceives shall be punished,” calmly answered the Roumanian; and he drew from out his breast the seven tongues of the hydra, one after another. Each time he drew out a tongue one of the seven cushions of the gypsy slid out from under him, and in the end, the rascal sat on the bare floor.

Then the brave Roumanian recounted his adventures and explained how he had lengthened out the night. And the emperor had need of little perception to know that the gallant lad spoke the truth, and he was filled with anger at the gypsy for having duped him, so he ordered his

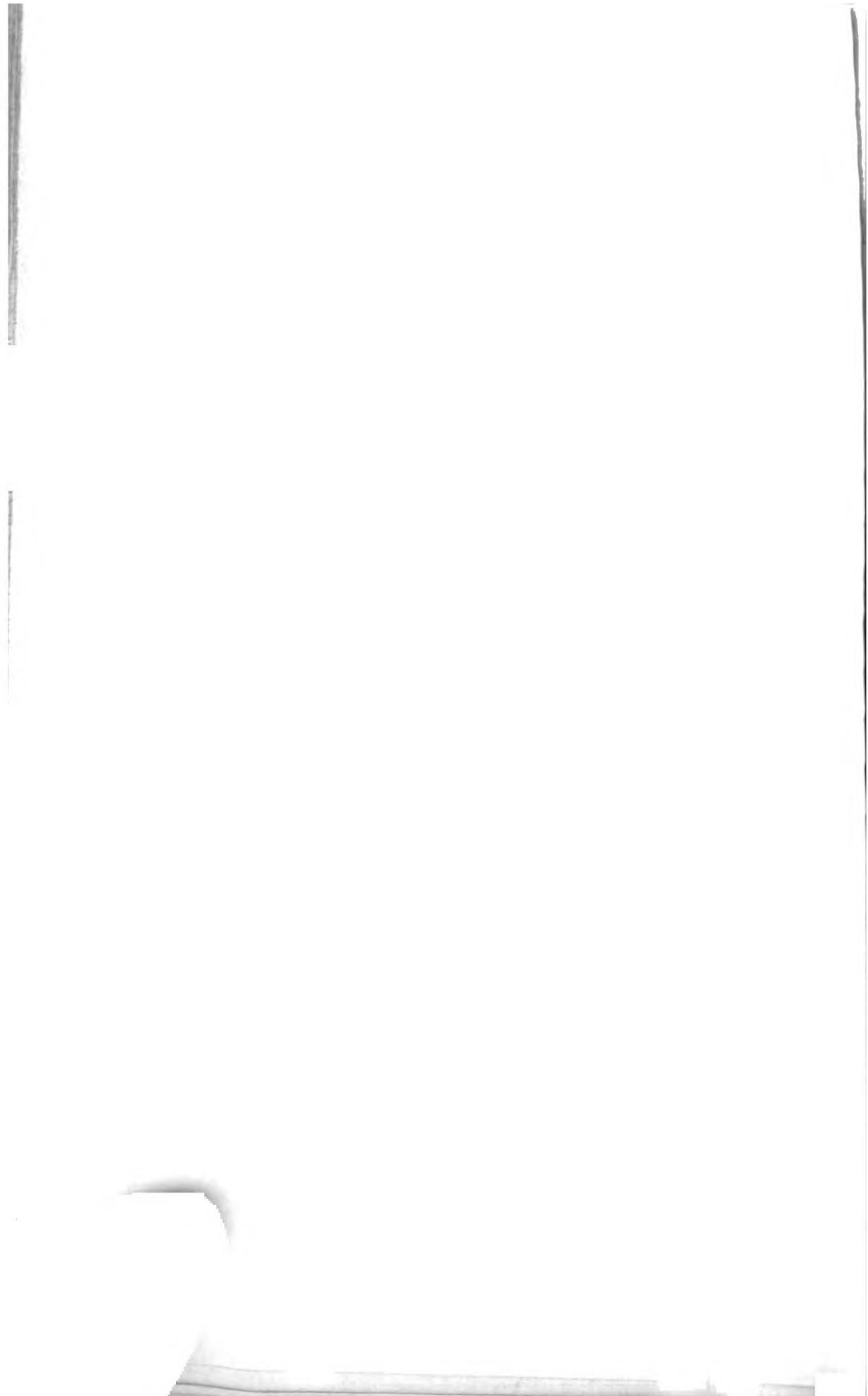
THE SEVEN-HEADED HYDRA

attendants to lead out two stallions from the imperial stables. And when they were brought up, he had the gypsy fastened to the tails of the wild horses, together with a sack of nuts, and the attendants lashed the animals with whips, and the affrighted stallions dashed away to the marshes, and wherever fell a nut from the sack there fell also a morsel of the gypsy's flesh until there was nothing left of him.

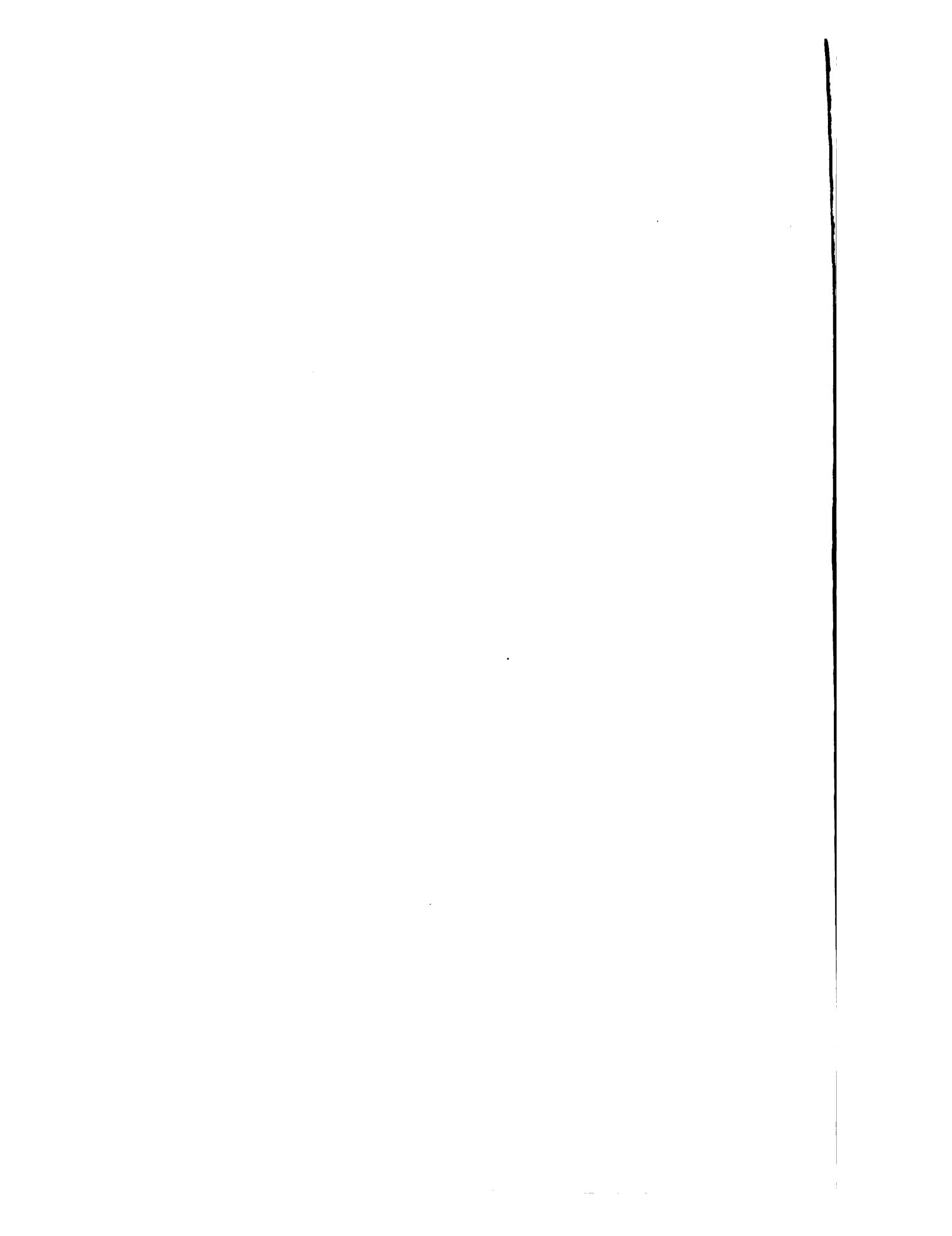
Shortly afterward, the wedding of the princess and the gallant Roumanian was celebrated with great pomp. The festivities lasted many weeks, and then the emperor, who was old and weary, abdicated in favor of his son-in-law.

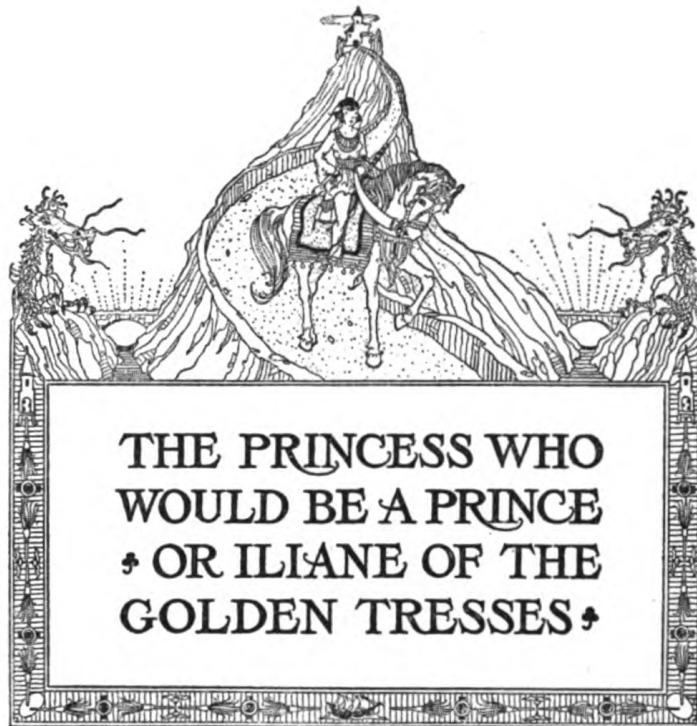
I, who tell you this, was there also, and assisted in the festivities by carrying water in a sieve and throwing dried plums in the open mouths of all the country gabies who stood roundabout.





**THE PRINCESS WHO WOULD BE A PRINCE
OR
ILIANE OF THE GOLDEN TRESSES**





PART I



NCE upon a time there was an emperor, and so powerful was he after many victories that the empire he had won stretched far, far away, even unto the spot where the Devil weaned his children. And all the rulers that he had defeated, far and near, were forced to deliver up each a son as hostage to dwell ten years in the court of the victor. On the bor-

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der of his empire there yet remained one ruler who had been strong enough to resist him. If ever any calamity threatened the subjects of this ruler, he was ready to cut himself in quarters to save them. But when he became old and feeble, he, too, in spite of himself, was forced to submit to his all-powerful neighbor, because he could not do otherwise. And one thought preyed upon his mind: how was he to satisfy the demands of the merciless conqueror and send him a son for ten years' service,—he who had only three daughters?

Thus he lived in fear lest the all-powerful emperor think him a rebel who refused to comply with his demands, and that therefore he and his daughters might be cast out to die in misery and shame. And finally the grief which overcast the brow of their father threw its shadow also on the white souls of his three daughters, and they moved heaven and earth to cheer him. But in vain: nothing they could say or do caused him to smile. Seeing which, the eldest took her courage in both hands, and asked her father one day at table what ailed him.

“Is it our behavior which displeases you, dear father? Or are your subjects wicked and un-

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grateful? What causes you so much pain? What viper, hidden in your heart, poisons your old age? We would shed our blood gladly to lighten your sorrow, for we love you more than life itself."

"You have ever been good daughters to me," replied the old man, "and I do not complain of your behavior, for you have never disobeyed me. However, you cannot lift the burden of sorrow from off my heart, for you are but women, and only a son, alas! can deliver me from the terrible plight which has overtaken me."

Surprised, the eldest daughter insisted:—

"I do not understand, dear father. Tell me what troubles you. Why do you hide the cause of your grief? Speak the world only and I will give my life for you!"

"What could you do, dear children?" said the old man sadly. "From your youth you have known how to ply the distaff and spindle, to sew, to weave, and to broider, but this is all that you know. Only a brave lad can deliver me, a son who could wield arms, flourish the saber, and charge like a lion upon dragons."

"Nevertheless, make known to us, father, the heart of your trouble. The skies will not fall if

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you disclose your secret, so that we, too, may know it."

And when the old emperor saw his three daughters beseeching him upon their knees, he yielded and said:—

"Listen, then, my children; this is the cause of my sadness: you know that whilst I was young and powerful, whoever dared covet my empire went out empty-handed with head cast down. Now the sorrowful years have chilled my blood and melted my valor; my arm is withered, and I can no longer brandish the mace which in other days caused my enemies to tremble. The stag may roam unhurt in the forest: no longer doth he fear mine arrow. Strange soldiers have seen the smoke of my roof-tree and watered their horses at my wells; my foes no longer fear me. What more can I tell you? I have bowed my head before our all-powerful enemy, as have all the other rulers before me. But they, according to custom, have yielded up each a son as hostage, to serve the conqueror for a space of ten years, and as for me, I have only three daughters."

"Listen, father, I will go as hostage," cried the eldest, "and I swear I shall be able to save you."

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“Your devotion is useless, poor little one,” groaned the old man. “Who knows in what maze you may become entangled over there, from which you may never escape!”

“Father, dear, of one thing you may be sure: only let me go, and you will never have cause to blush for me. Am I not a princess and the daughter of an emperor?”

“So be it, my child!” solemnly declared the old man. “Prepare for your departure.”

The brave girl was filled with joy, and she thought only of her journey. Her happiness made her leap and dance, and she skipped hither and thither, putting her dignity for the moment under lock and key. She furnished herself with a year's supply of fine clothing, embroidered with gold and precious stones, and with provisions of all kinds. She chose the most mettlesome horse in the royal stables, a beautiful animal with eyes of fire, mane of silk, and coat of silver.

Her father, when he saw her armed and equipped and caroling in the courtyard, gave her the benefit of his wisdom and experience. He instructed her how to conceal her real sex and

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to simulate that which she had assumed with her armor; he put her on guard against flatterers and boasters. Thus secure in her prudence and cunning, and disguised in the garments of a man, she would run no risk of being taken for a maid, but would be respected as a young prince chosen for a high mission. And he also warned her against the pitfalls of coquetry and malice which beset all females, that she might not bring upon herself the suspicion and contempt of the princes who would be her companions in the realm of the conqueror. Finally, he said to her:—

“God be with you, my child, and may you keep all my warnings behind your two ears!”

With a bound the maiden and her horse were outside the gates. Her warlike equipment flashed like a beam in the eyes of the guards; she cleaved the wind and vanished from sight in the twinkling of an eye, and had she not drawn rein farther on and awaited her escort of knights and attendants, they would never have overtaken her.

Now, the old emperor was, in truth, a magician (but his daughter was ignorant of this), and when she was well on the way, he set out to

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hinder her. On the second day of the journey he drew near her company, threw up a bridge of brass, and, in the form of a wolf, crouched under one of its arches. The princess pressed forward, when suddenly, out from under the bridge, bounded the wolf, his jowl drawn back over his cruel teeth. His howls gave the poor girl goose-flesh, and his eyes scorched her like coals of fire. He leaped upon her as if to rend her. Her heart stood still and she was paralyzed with fright. The thought of fleeing did not occur to her, but her horse wheeled around with a prodigious bound, and, losing her head for the moment, the poor girl spurred the excited animal, and not daring to look behind her, she let him gallop with her back to her father's palace.

The old emperor, who had already returned, heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and came to the gate to meet her, greeting her with these words:—

“Did I not tell you, little one, that all the flies in the world cannot make honey?”

“Alas! father, how could I know that in setting out to serve an emperor I should encounter wild beasts by the way?”

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“Rest at home, my daughter. Busy yourself with your spindle, and may God take pity on me! Only He can save me from the shame of exile!”

Days passed by, and the second daughter begged to be allowed to go as a hostage, promising to neglect nothing that would bring her success. She pleaded with so much fervor that her father ended by giving in. She also set out with arms and equipment. But on the second day of the march, she, too, encountered the wolf who barred the way under the bridge of brass, and she had not the courage to go on.

The old emperor was at the gate to meet her on her return and said:—

“Did I not tell you, little one, that no one catches all the birds that fly?”

“That is true, dear father, but the wolf was too terrible. He opened his mouth to swallow me whole and his eyes threw out flashes of lightning to destroy me.”

“Rest at home, daughter. Busy yourself with your broidery and with the cooking of tarts. As for me, may God come to my aid!”

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Days passed by, and the youngest daughter appeared before her father at the end of the meal and said:—

“Father, it is my turn now. I pray you let me try my luck; perhaps I can trap the old wolf.”

“After the failure of your elders you surprise me, little braggart. How do you dare speak of trapping an old wolf, you who hardly know with which hand to eat your porridge?”

And he did all that he could to laugh her out of her notion, but to no purpose.

“Father, for the love of you, I could cut the Devil in quarters or else turn Devil myself. I have all the will in the world to succeed, but if God is against me, then I must turn about with no more shame than my sisters.”

But the emperor hesitated, argued, and found excuses to keep her. She, however, stroked his beard so gently and wheedled so prettily that, conquered at last, he replied:—

“Ah, well! Since matters stand thus, I will let you go and we shall see what comes of it. But I shall laugh long when I see you return with your head hanging low and your eyes cast down on your slippers.”

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“Laugh, father, if it please you; I shall not be dishonored.”

Quite happy, the young girl said to herself that she must choose a white-haired knight for counselor, and, recalling the tales of her father's youthful valor, she bethought herself of his war-horse and remembered that she must choose herself a mount from the royal stables. So she searched through all the stalls, looking here and there and passing over all the gallant stallions and beautiful mares with disdain, for none of them pleased her.

Finally, in a far corner, after much searching, she came across the famous war-horse of the emperor, a decrepit old beast, lame and worn out, and lying on the straw. And a great pity took hold of her; she could not take her eyes off him. Seeing which, the horse opened his mouth and spoke to her:—

“Mistress, your eyes are soft and full of compassion. It must be your love for your father, the emperor, which causes you to pity me. He was a great warrior in his time. We have seen, the two of us, many a field of battle and we have gained much glory. But old age has overtaken

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us; never does any one mount me. And if you find my back all dry and withered, it is because my old master has neglected me. But such is my breed that even now, should any one tend me and feed me to my taste, I should be mended in ten days' time so that I could be put up against the most beautiful horse in the emperor's stables."

"And how must you be tended?" asked the young princess.

"I must be washed morning and night in rain-water; and because of my bad teeth, I must be fed barley boiled in milk."

"I am almost tempted to try it," said the princess, "provided you will help me in certain designs."

"Ah, well, try it, mistress! You will never repent it," replied the old horse.

So the princess did all that was required, and on the tenth day a tremor ran through the rusty hide of the old beast and he became as glossy as satin, as round as a melon, and as light as a chamois. Therefore, full of joy, he looked upon the young girl, caracoled, and said:—

"May God give happiness and good fortune

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to the daughter of my master, for she has rendered my life worth living! Let her utter her wishes and I will obey them."

"I wish to go before our enemy, the all-powerful emperor, and I have need of a wise counselor. Of all the white-haired knights, which one shall I choose?"

"You have need of none of them. As I have served your father, so will I serve you, if you but listen to me."

"Agreed!" replied the princess. "Now, let us set out in three days; will that suit you?"

"At once, if you order me," replied the horse.

So the princess put everything in order against their departure. But far from burdening herself with provisions enough for a year's use, as her sisters had done, she chose only a few simple garments such as young men wear, a little linen, and a moderate supply of food, together with a small sum of money in case of need. She mounted astride her horse and went before her father.

"May God protect you, dear father," said she, "and keep you in good health against my return!"

"Good fortune to you, daughter!" replied the

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old man. "What must be, must be; only mark well my instructions: in case of danger confide your soul to God, the Source of all good and all power; from Him alone you may count on protection."

And so the young girl set out.

But the old emperor planned to put her to the test as he had done her elders, and so, on the second day of the journey, he threw up a bridge of brass across her way. However, the clever horse made known in some way to the young girl that whatever might happen would be only a trap laid to test her courage, and he gave her counsels against the hour of her proof.

When she arrived at the brazen bridge, the fierce wolf bounded out upon her, his eyes red with fury, his teeth gleaming, his jaws gaping like an oven, his tongue flaming like a firebrand. She felt a great trembling seize her; the wolf was about to leap upon her and rend her with his claws. But the brave girl was too quick for him; she spurred her horse and dashed upon the ferocious animal, her saber gleaming, and if the wolf had not darted aside, he would have been cleft

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in twain from muzzle to tail. But she did not flatter herself on her prowess, for her strength came from God; whether she wished it or not, she must go on and fulfill her mission; so as gallantly as any knight she bounded ahead and cleared the bridge.

Her father, rejoicing in her courage, fled on ahead of her, and after two more days of the journey, he threw up a silver bridge and waited for her in the form of a lion.

But the horse spied this new trap and showed his mistress now to avoid it. When she arrived at the bridge of silver, the huge beast came out from the ravine, his jaws yawning as if to swallow both horse and rider at one gulp. His tusks were like cutlasses, his claws like brazen hooks, and he made the forest resound with his roaring and bellowing; the trees trembled and the little animals of the plains set up a dismal lamentation; it was enough to draw blood from one's ears to hear it. Only to see the monster's head, as large as a bushel, his mane bristling like a forest of pine trees, caused the princess to lose her breath. Nevertheless, encouraged by her horse, she charged upon the beast, her saber in air, and

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so gallantly that had not the monster drawn back, she would have hacked him in four quarters. Then with a bound she cleared the bridge, giving thanks to God.

For the first time in her life the princess found herself beyond sight of her own home, and now, both wolf and lion vanquished, she had leisure for looking about her. It was springtime, and the sweet air made her giddy like wine. She longed to slip off her horse and press the flower-studded sward under her feet, to gather armfuls of the perfumed blossoms that enriched the mantles of valleys and hills, and whose names she did not know. She would have liked to stretch herself under the shade of a great tree to enjoy the whistle of the merle and the twittering of the chaffinch, and so sweet was the song of the brook which slipped over its bed of sand, limpid as warm tears, sad and gay by turns, that she was tempted to tease its ripples with her feet or caress its wavelets with her hands. She followed its waterfalls with longing eyes, bewitched by its murmuring. Her dreams floated along its current, gliding amongst the water-lilies and iris.

But the horse rescued her from the spell of

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springtime and gave her sage counsels and good advice, hastening his step without wandering to right or left. She learned from him that knights do not seek repose until after the victory, and he warned her that she must prepare herself for another trap, and once again he counseled her how to escape from it triumphant.

The princess was careful to listen to the good horse with both ears, for had he not given her abundant proof of his wisdom? As before, her father had taken a short cut and gone on ahead of her. This time he threw up a bridge of gold across the way, and in the form of a dragon with twelve heads, hid himself under the arch.

When the maiden drew near, suddenly the dreadful animal sprang into view. His long tail beat the ground; his jaws, lit up with fire, spouted out horrid vapors, from which his tongue darted back and forth like a forked flame. At sight of the monster, the young girl felt her heart turn into water. But the horse comforted her and recalled his advice. She grasped the reins firmly, pressed her knees into his sides, thrust in her spurs, and with saber uplifted, charged upon the dragon.

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The combat lasted an hour. She struck out with all her strength, and the good horse planted himself on the slope in such a way that, from her point of vantage, she finally severed one of the monster's heads. But the dragon defended himself well, and the young girl was hard put to it before she wounded him mortally. Then, with roars that split the heavens, the beast made three bounds into the air and fell over on himself, at the same instant turning into a man.

To the great amazement of the princess, it was her father who stood before her, and he soothed her trembling by taking her in his arms, pressing her against his heart, and kissing her on her forehead, as he said: "Now I know you to be as brave as the bravest, my daughter, and you have done well to choose my old war-horse, for without his help you would have returned with head cast down like your sisters. I have great hopes that you will succeed in your mission, but forget not my counsels and listen well to the horse of your choice, so that we may see you once more in our kingdom."

With bent knee the young girl received the paternal blessing and set out again on the road.

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She traveled a long, long time until she arrived at the mountains which hold up the roof of the world. There she encountered two genii who had been fighting for two years without either being victor, and it was a fight unto the death. As soon as they saw her, taking her for a young man in quest of adventure, one of them said to her:—

“Prince Charming, come to my deliverance and I will give you a horn which can be heard as far as a three days’ journey!”

And the other one broke in:—

“Prince Charming, come rather to my deliverance and I will give you my horse Sunbeam, an animal without compare.”

The princess consulted her horse, and he declared in favor of the genie who had promised her Sunbeam, for he recognized in that animal his younger brother, who was even more active and powerful than himself. Therefore she threw herself upon the first genie, and split him asunder from his crown to his navel. The second genie, thus delivered, thanked his savior, and kissed her, without noticing, however, the flavor of the kiss, and they went together to his house to find Sunbeam, according to the bargain.

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The mother of the genie, mad with joy at sight of her son safe and sound, made haste to embrace his deliverer. She kissed the mouth of the princess and noticed the savor of her lips.

As the young maid had need of rest after so many trials, she was led to the best room, but not until she had sought out her horse and asked for fresh counsels, which he gave her.

In the mean time, the old woman, scenting trickery, told her son that she was certain his deliverer was no man, but a maiden, and in that case, so brave a girl would make him a fine wife. But the genie scoffed at his mother and replied that never, no, never, would he believe such nonsense. What woman's hand could have brandished the saber so well as this handsome lad? But his mother was obstinate and promised to obtain a proof of her suspicion.

So when night came she placed at the head of each bed a bunch of flowers of a certain kind which would fade beside a man's bed, but would remain fresh beside a maid's.

However, in the night, according to the advice of her horse, the princess got up, entered on tip-toe the chamber of the genie and removed his

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flowers, which were faded, and left her fresh ones in their place, and soon they, too, were withered. Then she returned to her bed and slept soundly. At dawn the old woman hastened to her son's bed and found the faded flowers as she had expected. Going next to the chamber of the princess, she was surprised to find her flowers equally withered.

Nevertheless, she still believed the young man to be a maid.

“Listen,” said she to the genie, “how his words flow like honey. What man could have such a waist, as slender as the stem of a silver goblet? His golden locks, his lips redder than cherries, his large eyes so clear and innocent, his frank countenance, his small hand and dainty foot — all these could belong only to a maiden of noble family, disguised under the armor of a knight.”

And so they plotted a second test for the young man.

After the usual morning greetings the genie took his deliverer by the arm and they went out into the garden. There he showed his companion all his flowers, told their names, and begged her

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to pluck a handful. But the prudent girl, mindful of her horse's counsels, suspected a ruse, and asked brusquely why she should be offered flowers rather than a sight of the genie's stables. So more than ever the latter doubted the truth of his mother's suspicions; still the old woman was obstinate in her belief.

As a last proof she planned thus: her son was to lead his deliverer into the armory and invite him to choose any weapon he might fancy, and perhaps his choice might betray him. So after supper the genie led the young girl into the arm-room where were displayed all kinds of weapons, scimitars, yataghans, maces, and sabers — plain ones and ornamented ones. For a long time the princess examined them, testing their temper and their suppleness, then she thrust into her belt the plainest weapon of all, an old Damascus blade, full of rust, and shaped like a cross. Surely only a seasoned warrior would have made such a choice, thought the genie. But his mother was vexed at not being able to prove her suspicions, and declared that if this young person acted like a man, he was, nevertheless, a maid and the shrewdest and cunningest one in the world!

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Nevertheless, when the princess announced that she must take her departure on the morrow, the genie led her to the stables and gave her his horse Sunbeam, according to his promise.

So the emperor's daughter set out on Sunbeam, and impatient to arrive, she urged him along briskly, and the old war-horse, galloping by her side, addressed her thus:—

“Up to this time, mistress, you have followed my counsels and all has gone well. Once again listen to me and you will not regret it. I am old, and I am not afraid to avow, now that I know who replaces me, that I hesitate to continue on the way. Let me, then, return by the shortest road to my old master, and do you pursue your journey with my brother. Put all your faith in him, as you have done in me, and he will not betray you. He is my other self, only younger and hardier. Wisdom came to dwell early with Sunbeam, and he will advise you in time of trouble.”

“Indeed, my old friend,” replied the princess, “you have served and protected me faithfully and I have always succeeded whilst listening to

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your counsels. And to-day I should be tempted to refuse to part with you did I not know your loyalty to my father and your wish to return to his side. So I will accede to your request and put my faith in your young brother as I did in you. But before you depart, I should like to be sure that he loves me as you do."

"How could I help loving so gallant a maid, princess?" replied Sunbeam. "How could I help being proud of carrying you? Depend upon me, mistress, and I promise you shall never regret the loss of my elder brother. He is too old, poor fellow, to suffer the hardships of such a journey, and I would spare him its fatigues and perils. I know that you will encounter many dangers, but by the grace of God you shall not perish by the way. Only listen to me."

So the princess, with tears in her eyes, bade farewell to her old horse and departed on Sunbeam. They traveled for a long, long time, and at a certain point on the road a lock of golden hair lay in their way. The princess asked Sunbeam if it were better to pick it up or to leave it, and the horse replied:—

"If you take it, you will regret it, but if you

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leave it, you will regret it as well; therefore pick it up."

So the young girl picked it up and hid it in her breast, and they continued their journey.

They traveled over hill and dale, they traversed gloomy forests and smiling meadows, gay with myriads of lovely flowers, they waded through limpid streams and rivulets, and finally came to the court of the all-powerful emperor, and about him were many hostage princes who served him as pages.

When these latter drew near to receive the princess, they could not understand why they were so drawn toward her. It seemed as if a kind of witchery resided in her words and glances. They led her before the emperor and, full of modesty, she stated her mission. The all-powerful ruler was pleased at the arrival of a prince so gallant and charming; and the intelligent replies of the maiden pleased him still further. So the emperor conceived an affection for this latest comer and attached her to his person. The princess held herself aloof from her royal companions, both because of her sex and because many of

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them were idle and roisterous. And they envied her, because she had captured the favor of the emperor.

PART II

Time passed by, and the princess felt herself at home in the court of the conqueror.

One day, to amuse herself, she dressed and cooked the meats, and whilst seated at table, two of her companions came to visit her. The young girl invited them to partake of the meat, and they found it so much to their taste that they cleared the table and ended by licking their fingers; and when next they talked with the other princes, they declared that never before in their lives had they tasted such excellent food. So that all of them joined in tormenting the princess to prepare another meal, and on the very day upon which she made ready the food a strange thing happened. The imperial cooks became stupefied with drink and there was no fire in the ovens, and so the varlets came running to the princess to beg the loan of her meal.

Therefore all her fine meats were set upon the imperial table and the emperor could not eat

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enough of the delicate food. And when he had his cooks called before him and ordered them henceforth to serve meals of like quality, they were forced to reveal the truth. Upon which the emperor was much astonished. At this moment a number of his pages appeared and told him that the prince who had lately arrived at the court had boasted before his companions that he knew the whereabouts of beautiful Iliane of the song —

Hair of gold,
The spring doth bud,
The rose doth bloom, . . .

and that this prince had in his possession a lock of the lady's beautiful blonde hair.

As soon as he heard this, the emperor ordered the young girl in his presence and said brusquely: —

“Prince Charming, why have you hidden from me your knowledge of Iliane of the golden tresses? Have I not shown affection for you and honored you above all the rest?”

And he demanded to be shown the lock of hair and asked how it was come by, adding: —

“If you do not find for me the lady whose lock

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of hair you cherish, I will have your head cut off and it shall roll between your feet. I have spoken."

The poor young maid tried to stammer an excuse, but the emperor would not hear her. Therefore she went to seek out her horse and report her ill-luck, but he answered:—

"Do not be afraid, mistress; only last night my brother confided to me in a dream that a genie had stolen Iliane, whose lock of hair you found; she would not marry him at any price, therefore, she has sent him to capture her stud of mares, and the genie, mad with love, is racking his brain for a means of carrying out her wishes. Meanwhile, Iliane is amidst the sea-marshes. Return to the emperor and ask that twenty vessels be furnished you, laden with precious merchandise. Go now and you shall know the rest in good time."

The princess did not wait for her horse to speak a second time and went straight before the emperor.

"May you have long life, all-powerful ruler, and may your presence be always honored! I am come to say that, please God, I shall accomplish

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my mission, provided you will furnish me twenty vessels laden with precious merchandise."

"Boy, I will give you all that you ask, but see that you bring back Iliane of the golden tresses," replied the emperor.

As soon as the vessels were equipped, they were laden with all kinds of rich merchandise. The princess boarded one of them with Sunbeam, and the sails were set against the wind.

Neither winds nor waves hindered them, and after a voyage of seven weeks they reached the marshes of the sea and disembarked on a beautiful shore. On leaving the boat the princess carried with her a pair of dainty slippers embroidered in gold and ornamented with precious stones; and trotting here and there upon Sunbeam, she soon discovered a group of revolving palaces, castles which turned upon themselves, and followed the rays of the sun. And she advanced in their direction. Three slaves of the genie, guardians of Iliane, came to meet her, attracted by the beauty of the slippers. The princess, when questioned, replied that she was a merchant who had lost her way amongst the

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marshes of the sea. Already, from her window, Iliane had perceived the handsome merchant, and her heart was drawn strangely toward him.

She was well content that the genie was not at hand, happy to escape for an instant from his odious love-making; for he was far away, where she had sent him in search of her stud of mares. After having listened to the report of her slaves, she advanced toward the handsome merchant, full of curiosity to see the wonderful slippers; but the clever fellow told her that he had much finer ones in his vessels and begged her to go with him and see his wares.

Moved by his wheedling, Iliane boarded the ship, and whilst she handled the splendid finery, her eyes fixed on the heaps of beautiful goods, she did not see the shore receding and the sea engulfing the marshes, so that soon upon the horizon there was no sign of any island or shore. And since God favored this adventure, there was a sweet breeze, and the vessels darted over the sea like arrows. Lifting her eyes, finally, Iliane of the golden tresses found herself in the midst of the vast sea, and as she was a woman, she began to lament, and feigned anger at the merchant's

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ruse. But in the bottom of her heart she blessed her deliverer who had stolen her out of captivity.

They reached the distant shore without hindrance, but behold! lying in wait for them was the mother of the genie, who was a witch.

She had set out in pursuit of them as they left the marshes of the sea, and after flying over the blue waters, hopping from wave to wave, one foot in the air and one in the foam which covered it, here she was at their heels the instant they touched the shore. Iliane did not need to look at the wicked woman twice in order to recognize her, and in alarm she pointed her out to her companion, behind whom she was now mounted on Sunbeam. Wretched at the thought of being recaptured, she began to weep bitterly on her deliverer's shoulder.

Therefore the daughter of the emperor asked of the horse what was to be done, for already the breath of the old woman was scorching their shoulders, and Sunbeam answered:—

“Thrust your hand into my left ear and take out the whetstone you will find there and throw it behind you.”

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The princess obeyed him, and they galloped ahead like a hurricane, whilst behind them rose up a great mountain of stone which stretched up to the sky. But the witch was not daunted and began to climb it, clinging to the rocks with hands and feet. Finally, she reached the top and slid down the other side and gained upon them rapidly. Iliane saw her drawing near and told the princess, who again consulted the horse.

“Thrust your hand into my right ear,” said the clever animal; “take out the brush you will find there and throw it behind you.”

Thus did the daughter of the emperor, and at once a great forest sprang up behind them, so wild and so thick that a young deer could not have penetrated it. But the old witch was not daunted and crashed through it, gripping the branches and breaking them and pushing between the thick trunks which gave way before her. Thus it was not long before she again caught up with them, and the flames which she spit from her mouth began to scorch their hair. Whereupon the daughter of the emperor again sought counsel of Sunbeam, and he answered:—

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“Make haste and take the ring off Iliane’s finger and throw it behind you.”

And this time a tower of stone, as smooth as ivory, as hard as steel, and as bright as a mirror, rose up behind them and reached up to the sky. The witch cursed them in her rage, seeing that she could never climb over it nor make a breach through which to pass to the other side. Nevertheless, she made a terrible effort, curved her body like an arc, and with a dizzy leap attempted to reach the top of the tower. But she crashed down on the battlements, and all around her were menacing hooks to which she was forced to cling without being able to hoist herself up and pass over.

She did all she could, however, to destroy the fugitives, and spit out flames for miles around the tower, but not a spark fell at the foot of the tower itself, and it was there that Sunbeam and his charges were hid. She could hear them mock her, and yet, caught amongst the hooks, she was unable even to loosen an arm and thus threaten them with her talons. And she became so full of rage and spite that she burst asunder and fell down, down into the donjon of the tower.

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Upon this the tower began slowly to sink out of sight until nothing remained but the broken body of the evil woman; and after taking a last look at their pursuer, the princess and Iliane left her to the crows. So they pushed on and were soon at the court of the all-powerful emperor.

He received them with joy, and when he looked upon Iliane of the golden tresses, he was captivated by her beauty. But Iliane was very sad, and wondered why other maidens could marry the men of their choice whilst she must always listen to words from lips that failed to please her; for now she was deeply in love with her handsome deliverer, and cared no more for the emperor than for the genie.

But the emperor begged her to be his wife, and to gain time she answered:—

“Glorious emperor, may you always rule with splendor! As for me, it is forbidden that I marry except my stud of mares be restored to me with their stallion and all the rest.”

So the emperor summoned the brave deliverer of Iliane and said:—

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“Prince Charming, go and bring to me this stud of mares with their stallion and all the rest, or I will have your head cut off.”

But the poor maid was rebellious and replied:—

“All-powerful emperor, permit me to kiss your hand! You have once already put my head in danger in charging me with a service which I have faithfully rendered, and now you send me on another quest, while there are so many other gallants at the court, sons of emperors, standing idle. Since all proclaim you a just and honorable ruler, would it not be better to give this mission to another? What should I do and where should I go to capture this stud of mares with their stallion and all the rest?”

“How do I know?” asked the merciless ruler. “Move heaven and earth, if necessary, but go, I say, and that without another word!”

So the daughter of the emperor bowed her head and went out. She straightway sought Sunbeam and laid before him her trouble, and the good horse made answer:—

“Only find me nine buffalo-hides, cover them with tar, and fix them fast on my body, and do

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not be afraid, for with God's help you shall succeed also in this mission, but be sure, mistress, in the very end, the emperor will be punished for requiring this of you."

The princess obeyed the horse's instructions, and soon they set out. It was a long and difficult journey, but finally they approached the place where the stud of mares pastured. There they met the genie who was still wandering about in search of the mares and stallion, ignorant that Iliane of the golden tresses had been stolen away. He was in great perplexity about his errand and ran hither and yon like a fool, not knowing upon what saint to call for aid in herding the rebellious horses.

The princess told him that Iliane had been carried off from the revolving castle, and that his mother, being unable to overtake her ravisher, had died of spite; and when he heard this, the genie became like fire and flame. He tore his garments into rags and bellowed like a lion, and divining that the liberator of Iliane stood before him, he threw himself upon her, but she kept a cool head, and urged on her horse. Sunbeam guarded his mistress from the blows of the genie,

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for when he saw the giant lift his saber he darted under his arm and the blows fell on empty air. On the other hand, when the princess lifted her saber, the good horse bounded back, and the blows landed in the belly of the genie. They fought until the ground trembled beneath them, and all the beasts and birds fled in affright for twenty leagues roundabout. Finally, the genie fell to the ground exhausted, and with a blow of her weapon the daughter of the emperor severed his head. Then she sought the pasture where grazed the stud of mares and their stallion.

Once there, Sunbeam told his mistress to climb high up in a tree and to watch from there what should happen. Then the horse whinnied three times in such fashion that the mares gathered around him, and flecked with foam and snorting with anger, the stallion, resenting the intrusion of a rival, threw himself upon Sunbeam.

What a combat followed! God preserve you, dear children, from ever seeing such an one! When the stallion attacked Sunbeam he bit great pieces from the buffalo-hides that protected the horse's back, but when Sunbeam attacked the

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stallion, it was mouthfuls of flesh that were torn away! So they fought, until, all mangled and bleeding, the stallion sank down defeated, but Sunbeam had not a single scratch; only his coat of buffalo-hides hung in tatters, slashed like the beard of a crayfish.

Then the princess came down from the tree, mounted her horse, and led the mares behind her, whilst the stallion limped along in the rear. Thus she conducted the stud into the court of the all-powerful emperor and went ahead to acquaint him with her arrival.

Iliane of the golden tresses came out and called her horses by name, and when the wounded stallion heard her voice, he shook himself, and, behold, he appeared as before, without a single scratch!

Then Iliane asked the emperor to have the mares milked so that a betrothal bath could be prepared of the foaming liquid. But who could approach them? They kicked out whenever any one drew near, and the blow of their hoofs would have split a man's chest, so that no one could draw their milk. So the emperor again ordered Iliane's brave deliverer to undertake this task.

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But the princess was angry and despondent at always being set to such difficult undertakings, and was in a mood to give way to despair. However, she recalled the advice of her father and so began to pray to God for aid, and according to her fervent faith her prayer was answered, because she had a pure heart and a virgin body. Suddenly a heavy rain began to fall, and the water mounted up to the knees of the mares; then it became very cold and the water turned to ice, so that their legs were held fast. And when the princess saw this miracle, she first thanked God, then set about milking the mares as if she had done nothing else all her life.

The emperor was like to die of love for Iliane of the golden tresses; he gazed upon her as a lad gazes on a tree full of ripe cherries, but Iliane cared naught for him, and by all sorts of trickery she put off from day to day their marriage. Finally, at the end of her resources, she said:—

“Gracious emperor, I see that you have granted me all my wishes. There is only one more thing that I long for—give me that and I will marry you.”

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“My dove,” answered her lover, “my kingdom and all my goods are at your disposal. You see here only a slave to your wishes; I am like a poor idiot, dreaming whilst I wake, not knowing what I do when under the spell of your beautiful eyes. So ask what you will without further parley.”

“If this be true, noble emperor,” replied Iliane, “get for me the vase of holy water that is guarded in a little chapel near the river Jordan, and then I will become your bride.”

On hearing this, her lover again summoned the deliverer of Iliane and said:—

“Go, Prince Charming, and bring me the vase of holy water which is in a little chapel near the river Jordan. And do not loiter on the way, or I will have your head cut off.”

The poor princess turned away without a word, her heart heavy with despair, and straightway reported the thing to Sunbeam, who answered:—

“Mistress, this is the most difficult of all your tasks. Nevertheless, keep your faith in God, because the hour of the merciless and unjust emperor has sounded.”

So they prepared for the journey, and the

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clever horse told his mistress that the vase of holy water was on an altar, guarded by nuns, in the middle of a little chapel. The nuns never slept by night or by day, and only a hermit came near them to instruct them in holy writ. Whilst they learned of the monk, only one was left on guard, and it would be at this moment that the vase must be stolen.

So they set out and traveled until they came to the river Jordan and arrived at the little chapel. Through good luck the hermit had lately arrived and had called all the nuns to listen to his discourse. Only one was left to guard the holy water, and the lesson lasted so long a time that, wearied from her watch, the nun finally slept. Seeing which, the daughter of the emperor stole from her hiding-place in the corridor, tiptoed past the nun as quietly as a cat, and gently seized the vase in her hand and fled away on Sunbeam.

Suddenly the nun awoke, and in alarm saw that the vase of holy water was gone, at which she began to groan and lament in such fashion as to break one's heart. The other nuns crowded about her and added their lamentations, wring-

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ing their hands over the terrible misfortune that had befallen them. The hermit strained his eyes after the fleeing princess, and seeing that he was not to blame and there was nothing else to do, lifted up his hands and cursed her, saying:—

“Lord, Lord, three times holy, grant that the rascal who has lifted a sacrilegious hand against thy vase of holy water may be punished! May he become a woman if he is a man, or a man if he is a woman!”

And the prayer of the hermit was answered, and the princess felt a great change come over her, and she found herself in body and soul a gallant young man, like to the other sons of emperors, only braver and handsomer.

On their arrival at the court, the emperor was astonished at the change in his favorite page, who appeared so much hardier and bolder; as for the young man himself, he rejoiced in his transformation and was proud of his strength and vigor. In presenting the vase he said:—

“All-powerful emperor, I salute you! I have fulfilled all your missions, and I hope you have no more need of me. May you be happy and reign in peace.”

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To which the ruler replied: "Prince Charming, I am content with you. Be it known that after my death it is you who shall be my successor, for I have no lawful heir. But if God should grant me a son, you shall be his right hand."

And all the courtiers and princes heard his words and bowed their heads. But Iliane of the golden tresses, now that her last request was granted, decided to punish the emperor because of the many and cruel tasks he had imposed upon Prince Charming, whom she secretly loved. Besides, thought she, had the emperor really loved me, he would have gone himself in search of the holy vase and not entrusted the quest to another. So she ordered that her bath of mare's milk be heated, and she invited the emperor to join her in this bath of betrothal, and he consented with joy. Once in the bath she ordered her stallion to be led beside them that he might blow cool air upon the bath; and at a sign from her which the animal understood, he blew cool air upon Iliane with one nostril, and with the other he snorted forth red-hot air upon the emperor, who was instantly charred, like a cinder, and fell back dead in his place.

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And a great tumult went up about the country when the news of the emperor's strange death was noised abroad, and from all sides a crowd assembled to give him suitable burial. After which Iliane said to Prince Charming:—

“Prince, you have brought me here, and here you have led my mares and their stallion and all the rest; you have slain the genie, my ravisher, and his mother the witch; you have found me the vase of holy water. To you I owe my love and my life, so let us enter together the bath of betrothal, and I will afterward become your wife.”

“Let it be so,” replied Prince Charming, “since I love you and you love me. But understand that in our house it is the cock that speaks and not the hen.” And man that he now was, he ended by saying, “This is my will!”

So they embraced each other and entered the bath of betrothal, and Iliane of the golden tresses called her stallion to cool the milk. Her lover called also Sunbeam and the horses surpassed each other in their efforts to render the bath of an agreeable temperature. And after the betrothal followed the marriage and a feast that

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lasted for three weeks; and everybody rejoiced because God had given them a noble emperor and a beautiful empress.

Prince Charming reigned with wisdom and in the fear of God, protecting the poor and rendering justice to every man, and in all likelihood he reigns to-day, with Iliane of the golden tresses, if they are not dead!

I was also there, I who tell you this tale, standing on my feet and gaping in the air, for be it known there is never any seat at feasts for prattlers! But I have one here, for —

Upon my saddle I sit me down
Whilst telling tales of far renown!



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